

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not review by the speaker, for personal use only)

Mark 8:10-18

Peace be with you, brothers and sisters, this is Hwa-Chi. It's time to read the Bible again. Today we'll continue to read Mark chapter 8, verses 10 to 18.

Jesus in the wilderness of Gadara, with seven loaves and a few small fish, fed four thousand Gentile men. The disciples gathered up the fragments, filling seven large baskets. Jesus took His disciples on a second missionary trip, which ended here. This time, the journey began in the wilderness of Bethsaida, where Jesus revealed Himself as the bread of life to the Jews. At the end, in the wilderness of Gadara, Jesus revealed Himself as the bread of life to the Gentiles. Afterward, Jesus dismissed the crowd.

Verse 10: "Immediately got into the boat with His disciples, and came to the region of Dalmanutha."

They boarded the boat from the southeast shore of the Sea of Galilee, which was in the Gentile region; after boarding, they headed northwest, returning to the region where the Jews lived. They arrived in the region of Dalmanutha and disembarked there. If we look at the parallel passage in Matthew 15:39, it says, "And He sent away the multitude, got into the boat, and came to the region of Magdala." Magdala was a city at that time, and Dalmanutha should be a general term for that region, that is the city of Magdala in the region of Dalmanutha. The Chinese translation of Magdala (馬加丹) can also be translated as 抹大拉 (Magdalene). This city was located about five kilometers north of Tiberias and five kilometers south of Gennesaret. In Luke 8:1-3, it is mentioned that Jesus took His disciples to various cities and towns to preach, and besides the twelve disciples, several women were also mentioned. Among them, in verse 2, there were several women who had been possessed by evil spirits and afflicted by diseases, and they had been healed, including one called Mary of Magdalene, from whom seven

demons had been cast out. Perhaps Mary of Magdalene was also among the disciples on this missionary trip, and maybe it was in response to Mary's request that they went to the city of Magdala before returning to Capernaum. Mark did not record what Jesus did in Magdala, but instead recorded the actions of the Pharisees.

Verse 11: "Then the Pharisees came out and began to dispute with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, testing Him."

A few weeks ago, in the city of Gennesaret, the scribes and Pharisees came to find faults in Jesus. To avoid a direct confrontation with them, Jesus went north to the Gentile territories. And now, Jesus had just returned from the Gentile land to the Jewish region, and the Pharisees came to dispute with Jesus. It seems they had been keeping an eye on Jesus' movements. As soon as they found an opportunity, they wanted to test Jesus because the Pharisees had already decided to get rid of Jesus. This time, they asked Jesus to show them a sign from heaven.

Jesus had been working in the region of Galilee for some time, preaching the word, casting out demons, and healing the sick. So these Pharisees should have seen many miracles performed by Jesus, but they were still not satisfied. For they determined that all the miracles Jesus performed were done by Beelzebub, the ruler of demons. Although Jesus had already warned them very seriously in Mark 3:29, "but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness." They still did not listen. Now they wanted Jesus to show them a miracle from heaven; perhaps they wanted a miracle like when Joshua was fighting the Amorites when he prayed to the Lord in front of the Israelites, saying, "Sun, stand still over Gibeon; and Moon, in the Valley of Aijalon" (Joshua 10:12-13). As a result, the sun stood still. In their understanding, such a miracle could not be done by demons. Jesus had indeed controlled nature twice; He calmed the wind and the sea, but both times, only Jesus and the disciples were present, and Jesus did not let others see that He could control nature. It is clear that they came to ask for miracles not to believe but to test Him, to find fault with Him. For these testers, Jesus would absolutely not perform miracles because even if He performed miracles, it would not help them.

Verse 12: “But He sighed deeply in His spirit, and said, ‘Why does this generation seek a sign? Assuredly, I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation.’”

After hearing their request, Jesus sighed deeply in His spirit and said, “Why does this generation seek a sign?” Because this is a crooked and perverse generation, a generation that does not fear God, a generation that does not seek God. Since this is the case, why should I give them a sign? For such a generation, Jesus would not give any signs, so Jesus sighed deeply for this generation. We must understand that the Gospel of Mark records that Jesus came to earth as a servant to serve men; when people do not listen, Jesus can only sigh deeply.

There is something very special. If you read the parallel passage, in Matthew 16:1-4, it is the Pharisees and Sadducees who ask Jesus to show them a sign from heaven, and Matthew’s account is completely different. Jesus answered, “When it is evening you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red’; and in the morning, ‘It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times. A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.”

In Matthew’s account, Jesus directly rebuts them: you can discern the weather by looking at the sky, and you know how to judge what the weather will be like today, so don’t you know that the signs in the sky are the work of God? God shows them to you every day, and you still don’t understand? There is something very special here, that is, the angle of Mark’s account and the angle of Matthew’s account of the same event are completely different. If you only read the Gospel of Mark, you would think that Jesus is a Jesus who can only sigh deeply. If you only read the Gospel of Matthew, you would think that Jesus is indeed like a king, speaking with great authority. So which Jesus is the real Jesus? The answer is, both.

We must recognize that God is far greater than any of us; each of us can know a certain aspect of God, but what he knows will definitely not be the whole of God. Therefore, when we read the same passage of Scripture today, two people will have

two different interpretations; in fact, this is very healthy. This will make God's word richer and more applicable. Only a fool would use what he knows to limit God, thinking that God must be the God he knows, and then he puts himself above God. How foolish is that! When we come before God, we must be humble, for God has several aspects, He can meet the needs of all people.

Regarding this event, let's look at Matthew's account a little further. In Matthew 16:4, it says, "A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah." Although Mark's Gospel says no sign will be given to this generation, Matthew's Gospel opens a door, saying that this generation has only one sign, which is the sign of Jonah. What is the sign of Jonah? Matthew 12:40 explains it to us.

There it also talks about a wicked and adulterous generation, and only the sign of the prophet Jonah is shown to people. Then, He tells us what the sign of Jonah is, "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." In those days, the prophet Jonah did not listen to God's words, so God sent a great fish to swallow Jonah, and after three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, the fish spit Jonah out onto the beach of Nineveh. Jesus then used this incident experienced by a prophet to say that He Himself is the Son of Man, and He will also be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights; this is Jesus talking about His suffering on the cross, then dying, being buried, and rising from the dead on the third day. And in this wicked and adulterous generation, the only sign God gives to people is the salvation of Jesus Christ, who died and rose again. If you do not accept this sign, you will not receive the salvation of Jesus Christ. For you, there will be no other signs.

Dear brothers and sisters, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, such a great salvation, we have heard many times, and gradually we take it for granted. So it is often lacking impact in our conversations. We must recognize that this is the greatest miracle in the whole universe. And in the churches throughout the ages, how many martyrs have paid the price of their lives to prove this miracle? Watchman Nee, the last

twenty years of his life were spent in prison, and at any moment as long as he denied his faith, he could regain his freedom, but he's not willing to do that. Eventually he died in the prison. After his death, people found a note under his pillow, which read, "Jesus Christ is the Son of God, who died for the sins of men; He rose again in three days. This is the greatest fact in the universe. I believe in Christ and die for Christ." Watchman Nee witnessed what he believed, and we hope that we can all cherish it. In this wicked and adulterous generation, the only sign that God has shown is the salvation of Jesus Christ.

Verse 13: "And He left them, and getting into the boat again, departed to the other side."

Jesus ignored the questioning of the Pharisees and took His disciples onto the boat, heading to the other side, which should be Capernaum. Capernaum is about ten kilometers northeast of Magdala. This marks the end of Jesus' second missionary trip with His disciples.

Verse 14: "Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, and they did not have more than one loaf with them in the boat."

Here Mark does not tell us how long they stayed in Capernaum. Perhaps one or two weeks. Then, Jesus began His third missionary trip with His disciples. This time they first took a boat to Bethsaida, and then Jesus was going to take His disciples all the way north to the foot of Mount Hermon, to the city of Caesarea Philippi. There, the disciples were going to get to know Jesus Christ more deeply. After that, Jesus was going to take some of the disciples up the mountain of transfiguration, where they would see the glory that Jesus originally had. The third missionary trip was a journey of great faith, and it can also be seen as Jesus leading His disciples through the Feast of Tabernacles in faith. In their faith, their understanding of Jesus Christ was going to reach its fullest stage. And after this, Jesus was going to take His disciples to Calvary, leading them on the road of the cross.

Capernaum was the center of Jesus' work in Galilee and also a supply station for their journey. But after they got on the boat, the disciples realized they had forgotten to bring bread. Not sure which one of the twelve was in charge of food preparation. In short, someone did not do what he was supposed to do, and as a result, a dozen people went on a trip with only one loaf of bread. Perhaps at this point, the disciples were arguing who was responsible.

Verse 15: "Then He charged them, saying, 'Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.'"

While the disciples were busy with something, Jesus began to teach them, cautioning them to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Herod. Jesus was not really concerned about whether they had brought enough bread; rather, He was concerned about their discipleship training. Therefore, He took every opportunity to teach them some spiritual matters. Jesus mentioned two types of leaven: the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod. But what exactly is leaven? In the parallel passage in Matthew 16:12, it is clear that Jesus was warning them about the teaching of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. So, leaven refers to teachings.

Firstly, there is the leaven of the Pharisees, or the teachings of the Pharisees. The Pharisees placed great emphasis on the letter of the law, requiring people to strictly adhere to the rules and regulations of the law. They focused on appearances but did not care about the substance or spiritual meaning of the law. Eventually, they became a group of hypocrites, or actors. They acted in front of people, making them think they were very devout. They widened the scripture boxes on their foreheads and lengthened the tassels on their clothes to make themselves appear very devout, while their hearts were full of corruption.

The other is the leaven of Herod, which in Matthew is identified as the leaven of the Sadducees. These two are the same. The Sadducees were the liberal faction in Jewish society. They combined politics with religion, bringing the leaven of Herod into Jewish life. They were prone to compromise: compromising with politics,

compromising with the world, making Jewish life no longer about God, but about gaining political benefits and worldly assistances. These two actually represent the two extremes in Jewish society. One extreme is conservative, and the other is liberal.

Why are teachings compared to leaven here? Because when you add leaven to dough, the whole lump rises, and that makes food soft and easy to eat. Originally, God's teachings were meant to enable people to set aside themselves and obey God's will. But now, adding leaven has turned God's law into rules, diluted God's law, compromised with the world, and made it less strict. In short, the teachings of these two factions have fundamentally changed God's will. In fact, it is still the same today. The teachings in the church should be based entirely on God's word, not overly conservative or overly liberal. Being overly conservative can easily turn God's word into the letter, losing the spiritual reality. 2 Corinthians 3:6 tells us, "the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." Therefore, we must understand God's will in the Spirit and follow God in the Spirit, rather than obeying the rules and regulations. On the other hand, we cannot be too liberal, cannot mix the customs of the world, human philosophy, into God's word. We must reject the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod. What Jesus and His disciples were discussing here was a very serious matter; it was about how to follow God's word in life.

Verse 16: "And they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'It is because we have no bread.'"

The disciples were concerned about earthly matters and completely failed to understand what Jesus was saying to them about spiritual matters. Just a moment ago, they were arguing about who forgot to bring bread. Now, when they heard Jesus talk about leaven, they thought He was discussing the fact that they didn't bring bread. Dear brothers and sisters, how often is this our situation too: we are not on the same wavelength as God! God is saying A, but we hear B because our hearts are filled with various trivial matters from daily life, so when we hear God's words, we tend to jump to conclusions. How often do we find ourselves in church

on Sunday, and the preacher was laboring to explain God's word, but you were not interested and could not understand? Is it because your wavelength is off?

Verses 17-18: "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?"

Do you not see? Do you not hear? And do you not remember? Jesus was teaching the disciples about spiritual matters, but they thought He was talking about not having bread. Jesus also knew that there was not much time left, and the disciples needed to learn well. Therefore, Jesus asked the disciples six questions in a row: Why do you reason because you have no bread? Is this so important? Why do you not perceive or understand yet? Do you lack spiritual understanding? Why is your heart still hardened? Why are you so clumsy, so stiff? Do you have eyes to see earthly things but not spiritual things? Do you have ears to hear earthly things but not spiritual things? Do you not remember? In the previous journey, you fed five thousand people with five loaves and four thousand people with seven loaves. Have you forgotten all these things that you have experienced?

Brothers and sisters, these are also the questions that Jesus wants to ask you today. Jesus wants to ask you a series of six questions, hoping that we can all listen carefully in the spirit and answer slowly. The first question: Are you busy all day for the needs of life? Is this your whole life? The second question: Why do you still not understand spiritual things? After you have received grace and salvation, has there been no growth in your spiritual life during this period? The third question: Why are you still hard-hearted and unrepentant? The fourth question: Can your eyes not look at earthly things, but look up to God alone? The fifth question: Can your ears not listen to the noisy sounds of the earth, but listen to the small voice of the Holy Spirit? The sixth question: Can you review your past spiritual experiences; how has God bestowed grace on you? Have you forgotten these experiences?

Dear brothers and sisters, God knows that we live on earth, and our daily lives are very busy, but God wants us to live in the world but not of the world. I hope that we can learn to live an extraordinary life, and often ask ourselves these six questions in life, to help us turn to God in a timely manner.

Let's pray: Lord, forgive us. Our hearts are often occupied by the trivialities of everyday life, so we often do not understand Your will and cannot follow Your guidance. Help me, once again, to simply return to Your healthy and pure words, without the leaven of the Pharisees or the leaven of Herod, to be able to walk on the path of life. Bless my daily life. I pray in the holy name of Jesus Christ.