

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

Mark 8:17-26

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you; this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again. We'll continue to read Mark chapter 8, verses 17 to 26.

Jesus, with His disciples, went out for the third travelling missionary trip; this was the third stage of the discipleship training for the them. They first took a boat to Bethsaida, and the disciples were discussing among themselves because they forgot to bring bread. They completely misunderstood when Jesus warned them about the leaven of the Pharisees and Herod. Jesus was speaking spiritually, but they were thinking in material terms, concerned about the next meal rather than guarding against the teachings of the extreme conservatives or extreme liberals. Instead of saying that Jesus was disappointed with the disciples, it is more accurate to say that Jesus was a bit anxious because time was running out. Therefore, Jesus asked them a series of six questions, recorded in verses 17 and 18.

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?'"

Jesus asked them, "When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments did you take up?" They answered, "Twelve." Jesus wanted them to shift their focus from material bread to spiritual food. He continued to ask, are you still arguing over didn't bring bread to eat? Jesus was helping them to recover their sight from memory, to truly see important things, and to focus on the central point, amid a series of past events.

Verse 19: "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."

This miracle happened in the wilderness of Bethsaida, where Jesus fed five thousand Jewish men with five loaves. Jesus asked how many baskets of fragments they collected, and they answered, "Twelve." Here, it is crucial to follow Mark's thought process to truly understand the message he wants to convey. The emphasis is not on the five loaves or feeding the five thousand, although it was a great miracle to feed 5000 people with five loaves. The focus here is on the fragments, the leftovers that the disciples collected. The disciples actively participated in this miracle, gathering the leftovers that filled twelve baskets. These twelve baskets were filled by the disciples themselves. With these fragments in twelve baskets, why were they still concerned about what to eat?

Verse 20: "Now when the seven loaves were among the four thousand, how many large baskets full of fragments did you take up? And they said, 'Seven.'"

This took place in the wilderness of Gadara, where Jesus broke seven loaves to feed four thousand Gentile men. Jesus asked them, "How many large baskets full of fragments did you take up?" The disciples knew this well, and they answered, "Seven." Similarly, the emphasis here is not on the quantity of bread that fed the people but on the fragments. These fragments were also collected and filled seven large baskets, and the disciples actively participated in this, owning these fragments. The Jews as the chosen people of God, they had fragments in twelve baskets, and for the Gentiles, they had fragments in seven large baskets. With such abundant fragments, why were they still concerned about what to eat?

Verse 21: "So He said to them, 'How is it you do not understand?'"

After narrating these events, Jesus once again asked the disciples, "Do you understand now?" Dear brothers and sisters, do you understand? It is possible that, like the disciples, you still do not understand at this point. Over the years, I, too, have not fully understood why Jesus focused on the fragments here. The interesting aspect of reading the Bible lies in the fact that sometimes we think we understand, but in reality, we do not truly comprehend. Only when you realize that you do not

understand and carefully ponder the scripture again can you see truths that were previously unnoticed. Because Jesus knew the disciples still did not understand at this point, there is the following section from verse 22 to 26, which records another miracle. Why did Mark include this specific miracle? It was to enable the disciples to truly understand the meaning of fragments, a unique aspect in Mark's Gospel.

Verse 22: "Then He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him."

They should have traveled from Capernaum by boat and, upon reaching Bethsaida, disembarked. Capernaum, Bethsaida, and Chorazin were three cities north of the Sea of Galilee, not far from each other, forming a trio of satellite cities. Jesus performed many miracles in these three cities, and people should have been familiar with Him. As soon as they arrived in Bethsaida, someone brought a blind man, begging Jesus to touch him for healing. Perhaps this person had seen Jesus heal others by touching them and, based on his previous knowledge, sought healing in the same manner. Our situation is often similar: when in need, we approach Jesus, asking Him to meet our needs according to the ways we desire. The next time you have such thoughts, ask yourself whether you are God or if Jesus is God. Of course, Jesus is God. Since He is God, He has sovereignty. God can act in the way He desires, not necessarily according to our preferences. So, although this man sought Jesus to touch him, Jesus chose an entirely new method to heal the blind man. Jesus's purpose was also part of the disciples' training, helping them gain a deeper understanding of Him.

Verse 23: "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."

Firstly, Jesus took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. Here, we see Jesus intentionally avoiding the crowd, as He was never interested in the crowded, spectacle-seeking masses. Taking the man outside the city with the

disciples following on the sidelines, the narration of this miracle is aimed at the disciples. It is because they still did not understand the significance of fragments, or more accurately, they had not truly grasped who Jesus was. Instead of simply speaking a word to restore the blind man's sight, Jesus went through an elaborate process: spitting on the man's eyes and then laying His hands on him. He then asked, "What do you see?" The spit represents the words spoken by Jesus, and His hands pressed upon the blind man, imparting strength. From complete blindness, light entered the eyes, and the eyes began to perceive, allowing the man to see light. Thus, Jesus asked him, "What do you see?"

Verse 24: "And he looked up and said, 'I see men like trees, walking.'"

Because Jesus used spit to anoint his eyes and laid hands on him, the blind man said, "I see men, but they look like trees, walking." Thank the Lord, this was the first step of seeing. From complete blindness, now he could see, but not clearly or accurately. People appeared as trees, and these trees were mobile.

Dear brothers and sisters, don't find it amusing; this mirrors our own condition. Initially ignorant of spiritual matters, as we begin to read God's Word and receive the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, a bit of understanding dawns. The first time you truly see, it's undoubtedly exciting, and you start sharing everywhere. However, you might end up seeing fellow church members as trees – not the same as humans; humans have thoughts and emotions, while trees are just trees. Through this healing step, Jesus seems to be telling the disciples that they still do not truly understand Him. Even though the disciples had gone through two stages of training and their eyes were opened to see the light, it was not complete. Like this blind man, who with Jesus' words and touch could now see people but perceived them as walking trees.

Verse 25: "Then He put His hands on his eyes again and made him look up. And he was restored and saw everyone clearly."

At this point, Jesus did something more – He laid His hands on the man's eyes again. With God's Word, we can see light, but our vision may be unclear, incomplete, and inaccurate. At this stage, we need the objective truth to be transformed into our subjective experience. This means we need the transformation of God's hands in our lives, leaving traces of His touch.

Brothers and sisters, spiritual matters come at a cost. The ability to see and know is the first step, but we must not underestimate this step nor be satisfied with mere sight. When you see new revelations, God will lead you to experience what you have seen. This leading may cost you, it may demand more of your time and effort, or require you to let go of certain tightly held people, things, or situations. God wants you to go through His transformation. At this point, your eyes can truly be restored, and you can see everything clearly. This aligns with what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:15, "But he who is spiritual judges all things." It means that a spiritual person not only has God's Word but also bears the transformation by God's hands. Only such a spiritual person can be completely in tune with God, understand His will, and comprehend the roles played by everything within God's will. Only at this stage can everything be seen clearly.

Verse 26: "Then He sent him away to his house, saying, 'Neither go into the town, nor tell anyone in the town.'"

This town is likely referring to Bethsaida. Jesus had been preaching the word, casting out demons, and healing the sick in the region of Galilee, particularly in these three cities: Capernaum, Bethsaida, and Chorazin. Despite witnessing many miracles, the people in these cities did not repent. Consequently, Jesus rebuked these three cities as recorded in Matthew 11:20-24: "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it

would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you."

Therefore, we should not envy or seek after many miracles. If one witnesses numerous miracles and still refuses to repent, they will face Jesus' rebuke. For a city that does not repent, after opening the eyes of this blind man, Jesus told him not to enter it. This signifies that after truly seeing, one cannot go back to the old ways, cannot revert to previous sins; there must be a fresh start in the presence of God.

Jesus, through healing the blind man, aimed to help the disciples truly understand the meaning of the twelve baskets of fragments and the seven baskets of fragments. However, according to what the disciples should have seen, they still had not seen, and they still did not know who Jesus truly was. This marked the crucial moment in the disciples' training. After this step, Jesus led them away from the Galilee region because they were too familiar with it, and their eyes could not overcome the familiarity to accept new revelations. Jesus intended to lead them all the way north, ultimately reaching the foothills of Mount Hermon. As for what new revelations Jesus wanted His disciples to see, we will explore that tomorrow. Let us pray for God's help, allowing us to see revelations progressively and cumulatively. May we not be satisfied with what we have seen and be willing to follow Jesus further, transforming what we have seen into subjective experiences.

Let's pray together: Lord, thank You for opening our eyes and revealing many truths we had not seen before. Have mercy on us, continue to lead us forward, for seeing the light in Your Word does not equate to obtaining it truly; You need to guide us to experience the reality in Your words, with Your hands working on us. This is a grace-filled process, one we are willing to cooperate with, willing to dedicate ourselves to. Only when we truly let go of ourselves, not just seeing the light in Your words but also willing to offer our bodies as living sacrifices, will Your hands work more deeply in our lives. Let us truly come to know You; thank You for allowing me to know You more through daily Bible reading. Continue to guide my path, and I pray in the name of Jesus Christ.