

Clear Eyes: Seeing Jesus for Who He Really Is

Willing to See

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Willing to See

Mark 8:1–10 ESV

In those days, when again a great crowd had gathered, and they had nothing to eat, he called his disciples to him and said to them, “I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. And if I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way. And some of them have come from far away.” And his disciples answered him, “How can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place?” And he asked them, “How many loaves do you have?” They said, “Seven.” And he directed the crowd to sit down on the ground. And he took the seven loaves, and having given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and they set them before the crowd. And they had a few small fish. And having blessed them, he said that these also should be set before them. And they ate and were satisfied. And they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full. And there were about four thousand people. And he sent them away. And immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha.

Mark 8:10 – 13 ESV

And immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha. Also translated Magdala –

The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him. And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, “Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly, I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation.” And he left them, got into the boat again, and went to the other side.

What Keeps Us From Seeing

1. Resistance and justification lead us to drift, starting the hardened-heart process that keeps us from seeing.

Where have I become familiar with God without being transformed by Him?

Where am I demanding God do something new while ignoring what He has already done?

What assumptions might be preventing me from seeing Him clearly?

Mark 8:13–18 ESV

And he left them [Pharisees], got into the boat again, and went to the other side.

Now they had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. And he cautioned them, saying, “Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.” And they began discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread. 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? Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear?”

Mark 8:12 ESV

And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, “Why does this generation seek a sign?”

What Keeps us From Seeing

2. Fear causes us to interpret life with distorted vision, where we forget God’s faithfulness.

What fear currently shapes my perspective?

What evidence of God's faithfulness am I forgetting?

Am I viewing life through scarcity or trust?

Mark 8:14–18 ESV

Now they had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. And he cautioned them, saying, “Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.” And they began discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread. 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? Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear?”

Whatever you truly trust will be your treasure – and treasure always forms your heart!

What voices shape my fears?

What voices shape my hopes?

What voices receive more attention than God's voice?

Who or what is disciplining me?

Small Group Guide: Willing to See

Opening Question

Have you ever been completely wrong about a person — held a fixed idea of who they were, and then something happened that forced you to see them differently? What made you finally willing to look again?

The Most Dangerous Blindness Is the Kind You Don't Know You Have

Mark opens his Gospel with a statement that would have landed like a grenade in the Roman world: “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” Those words were not neutral. “Son of God” and “gospel” were titles Rome had already claimed — minted on coins, carved into monuments, applied to Caesar Augustus as a declaration of his divine authority and the good news of his reign. For Mark’s first readers, calling Jesus the Son of God was not religious language. It was a counter-cultural claim that forced an immediate question: Who is Jesus, really? And are you willing to let the answer cost you something?

The great irony of Mark’s Gospel is almost darkly comic. Demons recognize Jesus immediately. Wind and waves obey Him without argument. Crowds are regularly left astonished. But the people who should see most clearly — the religious experts, the chosen disciples — keep missing what is standing directly in front of them. Mark 8 is the hinge of the entire Gospel. Everything before it asks who Jesus is. Everything after it asks what it means to follow Him. And the thread that runs through all of it is a single question: Why do people keep failing to see?

The feeding of the four thousand that opens the chapter is easy to read as a simple repeat of the feeding of the five thousand. But the details are doing significant work. The first feeding happened on the Jewish side of the Sea of Galilee — five loaves echoing Torah, twelve baskets echoing the twelve tribes, a provision miracle wrapped in Messianic symbolism that a Jewish audience would have immediately recognized. This second feeding

happens in the Decapolis, Gentile territory. Seven loaves. Seven baskets. Seven being the number of completion. The Bread of Life is not only for Israel. He is for everyone, everywhere. The disciples had just watched this happen — and when they got in the boat and realized they had forgotten bread, they panicked anyway.

Jesus names two kinds of leaven to watch out for: the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod. The pairing would have startled anyone listening — these were enemies. But Jesus is making a point about how two completely opposite paths can arrive at the same destination. The Pharisees hardened their hearts through self-righteousness — a hyper-legalistic trust in their own tradition that left no room for a Messiah who didn't fit their categories. Herod hardened his through self-preservation — political compromise and a hunger for worldly power. One leaven was religious. The other was secular. Both resulted in the same blindness.

The disciples' leaven is quieter and more familiar: fear. Fear edits memory. It magnifies scarcity and shrinks perspective. It causes us to evaluate the present without remembering God's past faithfulness. The disciples had watched Jesus multiply bread for thousands of people — twice — and were now in a panic over having one loaf. Jesus' response comes in the form of questions. "Do you not yet perceive or understand? Having eyes, do you not see?" The invitation underneath those questions is the same one running through the entire chapter: the greatest threat to spiritual sight is not outright rebellion. It is the unwillingness to admit we might be blind — and the refusal to let Jesus be the one who opens our eyes.

For Discussion

1. The Pharisees in Mark 8 had seen or heard about miracle after miracle and still demanded more proof. Where in your own life have you noticed yourself doing something similar — demanding God do something new while "forgetting" what He has already done?
2. Jesus warns against the leaven of the Pharisees (self-righteousness) and the leaven of Herod (worldly compromise). Which of those two

feels like a more live temptation for you personally — and what does it look like in your actual daily life?

3. Your notes include three questions: What fear currently shapes my perspective? What evidence of God's faithfulness am I forgetting? Am I viewing life through scarcity or trust? Take one of those and answer it honestly with the group.
4. Your notes ask: Who or what is discipling me? In other words, what voices are most consistently shaping how you see reality, what you fear, and what you hope for? Are those the voices you would choose intentionally?

For Reflection

Psalm 139 invites us to pray: "Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts. See if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Sit quietly and pray that prayer. Ask God to show you one place where you might not be seeing clearly — where familiarity, fear, or a fixed expectation might be getting in the way. Share whatever He surfaces with the group.