

Mark 8:11-13

11 The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, asking him for a sign from heaven, to test him. 12 And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, "Why does this generation ask for a sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to this generation." 13 And he left them, and getting into the boat again, he went across to the other side.

After Jesus rebukes the scribes & Pharisees for the hypocrisy of valuing human tradition over the word of God, he goes to the region of Tyre. This is an area outside of Palestine north of Galilee. While he is there he performs an exorcism on the child of a Gentile woman. Then he goes to the region of Decapolis which is east of the Jordan River where he heals a man that is deaf. Jesus' problem with the crowd continues. No matter where he goes, he can't escape the crowd. The people flock to him to the point where there is another great feeding of 4,000 people. Then he gets into a boat and goes to Dalmanutha. This is an unknown destination of Jesus on the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

Last week we saw in chapter 7 where Jesus criticized the scribes and the Pharisees because they were following human practices instead of the word of God. Whenever we do something wrong and we realize it, there is remorse and we repent. Repentance is a very crucial concept throughout the Bible. One thing that we all must do is repent. It is necessary for us to repent in order to get right with God. But what the Pharisees do, instead of repenting, is they seek vengeance on the one that called out their hypocrisy. They demand a sign. Now reflecting on what we have covered so far in the Gospel of Mark, there have been multiple healings, exorcisms, demons recognize Jesus is the Son of God, he has calmed a storm, walk on water, fed thousands on two separate occasions, and the crowd flocks to him due to his divine signs. If there is anything that Jesus has already done it is to give a sign from heaven.

When I write and deliver sermons I try to take a lesson from the Bible and apply it to modern life. So, I'm going to talk about a personal experience where I received a sign from heaven. But first I need to talk about prayer time. I encourage everyone to have a daily prayer life. I confess that most of us tend to have short prayers. But what I encourage you to do is to have private, sincere, deep, and long prayers where it is just you and the Lord with no distractions engaging in private conversation, meditation, and reflection.

When I was at Memorial Christian Church we had Good Friday prayer vigils. We signed up for half hour shifts to pray in the sanctuary for 24 hours. The men would take the night shift. I signed up for a half hour slot from 2:00 to 2:30 am. Often there would be vacancies in the adjacent slots. Later on I would double up and pray for an hour. Eventually it got to where I was praying for 2 hours. This is one of the best things I have ever done. If you spend hours in prayer in get close to God. Two hours was my maximum for several years and I looked forward to that quality prayer time. Then one day I got a call from the search committee here and I needed to know the will of God. So, I blocked out four un-interrupted hours with no TV, no phone calls, no food or drinks for quality prayer time. After those four hours were over I asked God for a sign. Now I want to be clear about something. I was not asking for validation. Is God real? Are you there? The answer to those questions is known because they have been felt, assured, and confirmed in my life. What I needed to know yes or no, which way to go. "Please if it is OK with you God, I need a sign." Later that day Brenda calls me on the telephone and tells me that there

are 40 doves in the yard. “Are you sure?” “Yes, 40 doves!” Chills shot down my spine like a bolt of lightning. I gasped for air and my eyes whelped up. A dove is a divine sign and 40 is a divine number. This is definitely a sign from God.

There are signs all around Jesus. There is the heavenly sign at his baptism and all throughout his ministry; healings, walking on water, calming the storm, and the demons recognize his divine status. The crowds are flocking to Jesus because of the signs. With all of this going on, the Pharisees demand sign. Well plenty of signs have already been given that they have refused to see. Since they refuse to see what has already been shown, Jesus refuses to give them a sign.

The lesson is on how scripture applies to daily living. The Bible shows us different responses to Jesus. There are those that flat out reject him, there are the masses which do not have devotion, and there are the devoted disciples. Our response to Jesus is discipleship. Let God rule over your life; make prayer and Bible study part of your daily life.