

Beware of the Light

(Mark 8:11-21)

(preached 3/8/15 Pine Grove BC; Sunday AM)

Introduction

Please take your Bibles and turn with me to the gospel of Mark...

Mark 8:11-21...

For nearly 8 months now, we have spent every Sunday morning with the Lord Jesus Christ in the gospel of Mark.

We have watched his ministry begin with his baptism...

We have watched Him endure the devil's temptation.

We have watched Him preach, teach and heal.

We have watched him calm seas and tame the wind.

And we have watched him fill both Jewish and Gentile stomachs with fish and bread.

And we have watched him battle the religious leaders and train the disciples.

But today will be an incredible turning point in the ministry of Jesus.

It will be an incredible turning point in the Bible.

It will be an incredible turning point in the history of the world.

So, if you will, read along with me as I read Mark 8:11-21 aloud....

¹¹ The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him. ¹² 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." ¹³ And he left them, got into the boat again, and went to the other side. ¹⁴ Now they had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. ¹⁵ And he cautioned them, saying, "Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod."^b ¹⁶ And they began discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread. ¹⁷ 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? ¹⁸ Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember? ¹⁹ When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" They said to him, "Twelve." ²⁰ "And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" And they said to him, "Seven." ²¹ And he said to them, "Do you not yet understand?"

Let us pray.

Before we left for seminary, our family lived in a home that was halfway between Union and Whitmire.

The house was in a field, and though we had a few neighbors, we could not see their homes from our porch.

It was country living for sure.

Behind the house was nothing but the Sumter National Forest.

Well, every so often, Tonya would wake with the 4 worst words in the English language...

“I hear something outside.”

To which I would always reply...

“It is probably nothing.”

Then the next step in the conversation would happen..

Tonya would sit up and say, “I heard it again. You need to check it out.”

My thinking is always this...

If the noise is outside, that is good. That is why we paid for walls and doors with locks..

But that is never a good answer.

And so, I would get up and go flip on the flood lights all around the house.

And there is this moment before you flip the switch when this this thought always raced through my mind....

If I turn on this light and see something or someone, I am then forced to act.

I mean if I am in bed and just ignore the noise, that is one thing.

But when you flip the switch and the light reveals a real problem, you are forced to act.

You can't simply see the problem and then go back to bed.

Although if I had ever seen someone, I would probably tried that strategy first.

And so turning on the light was the moment of truth.

And what is the point in turning on a light?

It is to reveal to the prowler that someone is up and that they are no longer hidden.

And it is meant to provoke them to leave...or maybe attack..

When the light came on, it had an effect on anyone who may be outside up to no good...

But it also had an effect on the grown man on the inside who was doing the flipping of the switch...

With that in mind, I want you to consider some verses in the gospel of John...

All of us are very familiar with John 3:16.

But listen very carefully to the verses that follow John 3:16...

This is John 3:19-20...

¹⁹ This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. ²¹ But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

Simply put, the light that has come to the world in the person of Jesus Christ and it has an effect on everyone.

And in these verses that we just read in the gospel of Mark, we are going to see how the light of Jesus Christ affects two groups of people.

We are going to see how the Pharisees respond to the light and we are going to see how the disciples respond to the light.

And from what we see in their reactions, we are going to learn a lot about our response to the light that Jesus has brought into this world.

The outline for this message is on the back of your bulletin if you would like to follow along.

I have used the words of John to break this passage into 2 parts...

I. Haters of the Light (11-13)

II. Lovers of the Light (14-21)

What best describes your life this morning?

Are you a hater or a lover of the light that has come into the world in the person of Jesus Christ?

And I will warn you like Jesus warned the church at Laodecia...

There is no option 3...

He told that church that they are either hot or cold...

And I will tell you...

You either love the Lord Jesus Christ or you hate Him.

There are no, well I kinda like the light.

I like hanging around the church and hanging around Christians.

They are good people.

I like the morality of Jesus, but I really don't like Him telling me how to live.

I like coming to church, but I'm not a religious fanatic like some people.

I like the stories of the Bible, but you can keep the part that seems so divisive.

I want to be clear with you.

You are haters of the light.

The Bible has no category for people who like Jesus but have no interest in his Lordship in their life.

In the Scriptures, that person is always described as an unbeliever.

Now, are there people of differing levels of maturity in Jesus Christ.

Oh, you bet.

We are going to meet some very immature believers in our passage today.

But for a person who has claimed to know Jesus for 5, 10, 15 or more years and never grows in their understanding Jesus or their service to him...

How can they truly call themselves lovers of the light?

Therefore, everyone in this church today falls into one of these categories.

So, let's take a closer look at these two groups and we will begin with the haters of light in verses 11-13...

I. The Haters of the Light (11-13)

Let's take of a few things that are true about those who hate the light of Jesus Christ...

#1- They are spiritually blind.

Verse 11 says that the Pharisees came out to argue with him.

For the past 6 months, Jesus had left Israel.

He had spent at least 6 months if not more in Gentile lands.

If you look back at Mark 7:24, the Bible says that Jesus got up and went away from Israel.

And for the past few weeks, we have been following him.

There was two main reasons for leaving Israel.

First, it was a symbolic act to show that the good news of salvation would go into the entire world.

As Jesus headed north out of Galilee toward Tyre and Sidon, it was a great picture of Jesus' response to the rejection that he had received in Israel.

And he goes on a journey with the disciples into the hated lands of the Gentiles.

The Bible doesn't tell us much about this journey.

We did watch him heal the daughter of a Gentile woman who showed great faith in Jesus.

And we watched Him heal a man who was deaf and mute.

The final act of Jesus in the journey into Gentile land was his act of feeding 4000 people in the region of Decapolis on the eastern shore of the sea of Galilee.

But we read last week that after Jesus feed that Gentile crowd, he hopped in a boat and headed west back across the sea of Galilee and into Israel.

Now, he stops of the boat and what does he receive when he gets back to Israel?

A huge parade because the Jews have missed Him and repented of the sin of rejecting him...

And are now trust in their king.

Not a chance!

No, Jesus returns to Jerusalem and he steps off the boat into a fight.

The Pharisees are waiting on him at the dock.

Though he has been gone for some time, they haven't forgotten about Him.

They are already planning to destroy Him.

So they go out to meet him once he is back in town.

And they want a sign from him to prove that He is indeed sent from God.

We all know this kind of person.

Nothing satisfies them.

They will try to tell you that a stop sign isn't red.

They never seem content.

They always think their idea is best and it is unlike any other idea in the world.

They are not people of faith.

They operate out of distrust in everything.

And here, they ask for a sign from Jesus to prove who he is.

Now, think about what the Pharisees, scribes and the other religious leaders have already seen even up this point in Jesus ministry.

In chapter 1, he cast out a demon in the synagogue in the presence of the Pharisees.

In chapter 2, he makes a paralyzed man rise and walk.

In chapter 3, he heals a man with a crippled hand in the synagogue.

In chapter 5, he raises the dead 12 year old daughter of a synagogue official.

In chapter 6, he feeds 20000 people with bread and fish.

Certainly, the Pharisees, Saducees or scribes were present for that miracle.

Yet, here we are in chapter 8, and the religious leaders want another sign.

Really how ridiculous is this?

What more evidence do they need?

If you go back and think about John 3 again, the famous verse of John 3:16 was said when Jesus was speaking to who?

Well, he was speaking to Nicodemus.

And who was Nicodemus?

He was a leader of the Pharisees.

And in John 3, which had happened way before this event in Mark 8, listen to what Nicodemus tells Jesus...

3 Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; ² this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these ^[a] signs that You do unless God is with him.”

So, here is a Pharisee, a ruler of the Pharisees who tells Jesus months if not years before this scene in Mark 8...

Look, Jesus we know you are from God because no one could do the signs you do unless God was with you.

What do that tell us?

Jesus had done enough signs for the Pharisees to say that He was from God.

So, why do we find ourselves in 8 with more Pharisees wanting more signs?

I will tell you quite simply.

This is the power of unbelief.

It is a dominating force in someone's life.

Regardless of what they see, hear, or experience, it is never enough.

As the girls were growing up, we bought Connect 4, where the object is drop checkers into a grid and get four in a row before your opponent.

Well, I knew that it would take some time for the girls to catch on how to play...

And I never let them win. Even when they got better, I still won...

I truly believed that I would always win.

Then one day, the impossible happened.

Anna beat me.

And what was my response....

“Bet you can’t do it twice!”

And where do those words come from?

My refusal to acknowledge the truth.

And if she would have beaten me again, I would have said,....

“Well, you will never do it 3 times!”

And on and on...

And the Pharisees are here, and they know he is from God.

Their leader has even admitted that, but yet they want more signs....

And the truth is that a 1000 signs won't help unbelief in the heart.

They are spiritually blind, and only God can open their eyes.

However, that is not the only truth about the haters of the light...

They are not only spiritually blind...

#2 - They are headed for spiritual death.

After they ask for another sign, Jesus sighs deeply...

And tells them that he has no more signs to give the Pharisees...

And then we read a frightening verse in the Bible...

Verse 13...

“Leaving them...”

I don't know if any scarier thought in this world than seeing Jesus leave you.

And with those two simple words, the book of Mark takes a turn.

The Bible takes a turn, and the entire course of human history takes a turn.

Jesus had come to the Jews to offer God's kingdom to them, and they simply refused to repent and honor the King.

The unbelief of the leaders in this passage is representative of the unbelief of the nation of Israel.

And Jesus simply leaves them and heads in the opposite direction.

Though Jesus will eventually go the temple in Jerusalem and teach, the focus of his ministry shifts to his disciples...

As he trains them to take the gospel to the world, knowing that he will soon be taken to the cross.

And that is the truth of the haters of the light...

Their spiritual blindness and unbelief has but one destination...spiritual death.

And that is incredibly sad...

I think one of the saddest passages in all the Bible is found in Luke 19:41.

⁴¹ When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it, ⁴² saying, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for

peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. ⁴³ For the days will come upon you ^[S]when your enemies will throw up a ^[I]barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, ⁴⁴ and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation.”

In 70 AD, the Romans would destroy Jerusalem, and it broke Jesus heart...

But worse than that is the destruction that came to every Jewish soul who had rejected Him as King.

But such is the fate for those who hate the light of Jesus Christ..

But even in the hate directed at Jesus, we also see some love for him as well....

In verses 14-21, we find the....

II. Lovers of the Light (14-21)

Now, when we arrive at verses 14-21, some of you may wonder how are the disciples examples of those who are lovers of the light?

Because if you read the verses, the disciples are being rebuked here.

They are showing their shallowness here.

They are concerned about bread when Jesus is trying to teach them about following him.

They lack understanding.

They lack comprehension.

How can they possibly be examples of those who love the light of Jesus Christ?

Well, let's first look at verses 13 and 14...

Now, we just saw Jesus leave the Pharisees behind, and the end of verse 13 said that he embarked and went away to the other side...

And then verse 14 says that they had forgotten to take bread and didn't have more than one loaf in the boat...

So between verses 13 and 14, something very important happens....

The disciples go with Jesus, get in boat and set sail to the other side...

And you say, what's the big deal?

And I say it is a huge deal because first and foremost, Lovers of the light of Jesus Christ never leave his side.

Maybe Jesus said let's go... Maybe he said nothing...

#1 - But those who love Christ never leave him.

For you and me, that means we never get tired of reading about the Lord in the Bible...

It means we never get tired of talking to the Lord in prayer.

It means we never get tired of hearing His word taught or preached.

Lovers of the light never know enough about their Lord and Savior.

They are always wanting more.

You ever had an obsession with an actor or a sports team or a hobby of yours...

Where you can't stop learning about it.

Can't stop reading about it.

Can't stop thinking about it.

That is the desire that lovers of Jesus find in their heart.

He fascinates them.

The disciples heads may be hard, but their hearts are as soft as a pillow for Jesus.

They are going where He goes.

Now look, they get it all wrong in the boat.

They are worried about a loaf of bread, and in verse 15, Jesus is giving them a life lesson.

He is warning them of incredible influence that haters of the light can have on them.

He is telling them to guard themselves from the leaven of the Pharisees..

Which is simply a word picture to show them that unbelief spreads and can even infect them at times.

But after such a great lesson, the disciples thin that he is talking about real leaven...

And they go back to talking about real bread.

These guys are incredibly dense..

But I want you to see something about lovers of the light..

2 – *Lovers of the light receive instruction.*

Do you want to know the 6 favorite words of those who hate the light?

“Nobody tells me what to do.”

Even hearing that phrase makes me nervous.

But it is a common phrase of the world that despises authority.

And it is a common phrase of those who despise the Lord.

But the disciples receive the instruction of the Lord.

Even though they have trouble understanding and even obeying, they are teachable people.

That is an outstanding quality in a person.

To find someone who is teachable.

It is actually a biblical requirement for anyone who wants to be a pastor, elder, or deacon.

And it is modelled for us here in this boat with Jesus.

The disciples receive Jesus' instruction.

They listen.

They learn.

If you follow this passage to the end...

In verses 17 and 18, Jesus is rebuking them for their hard headedness....

And for their shallowness of thinking about having enough food when they have already watched him create bread out of thin air...

His point is...

“Why are you worried about what you will eat?”

“I got this.”

But don't miss the answers that the disciples offer to Jesus' questions about leftovers..

In verse 19, Jesus asks about leftovers from the first feeding of the Jewish crowd...

In verse 20, Jesus asks about leftovers from the second feeding of the Gentile crowd..

And get this...

The disciples answer correctly.

They are learning. They are taking note of what is happening.

They are seeing and even remembering the Lord's goodness and abundance.

Lovers of the light increase their knowledge about who Jesus is and what He does.

They don't just sit and listen.

They sit and learn and it changes how they live.

Though Mark doesn't record this in his account of this boat ride...

In Matthews account of this same ride across the lake adds an interesting ending to the story...

¹² Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Do you hear what that said?

They understood!

That is so encouraging to see and convicting to hear.

Lovers of the light are not only teachable, they grow from what they hear.

When I hear stories of people who have been in church for years...

Yet never move beyond spiritual milk, I am amazed.

The disciples were babies in Christ even here after a number of months...

Yet, they eventually became spiritual giants.

And before you use the excuse of they got the best training, remember these were blue collar men.,

They were fisherman and IRS agents and everyday ordinary men.

They weren't born with an OT in their hand.

Lovers of the light...

Are constantly with Christ, but they are also constantly learning from Him and about Him.

And with that passage, you find this incredible split in the gospel of Mark.

The Pharisees get more and more determined to kill him.

And the disciples get more and more instruction about him.

It is a huge fork in the road and one leads to heaven while the other heads to hell.

Conclusion

And today is a fork in the road for you as well.

IS it time to follow Christ with your whole life or it is time to persecute Christ with your whole life.

As you sit this morning, you are either a lover of the light or a hater of the light that has come into this world in the person of Jesus Christ.

And that light has shown brightly through God's Word today.

You don't need another miracle to see that Jesus is who He says He is.

Jesus is the Son of the Most High God.

And he has died in your place to pay for the sins of sinners like you and me.

You don't need the sky to part.

But you do need your heart to part from this world.

By repenting of your sin and turning to Christ alone to save you.

Many if not all of you have heard of Billy Graham.

But I doubt any of you have heard the name Charles Templeton.

Well, Billy Graham and Charles Templeton were close friends and gifted evangelists in the 1940s.

In fact, most believe that Templeton was the more gifted preacher.

He was incredibly intelligent and was seen as a very gifted communicator.

He led revivals, youth camps, preached to 20000 people at a stadium crusade.

And both men were good friends and fierce evangelists.

In 1957, Charles Templeton declared himself to be an atheist.

He rejected the Bible.

He rejected Jesus.

He moved to Canada, became a journalist and almost became the prime minister of Canada.

But he often blasphemed the name of Jesus, eventually writing a book in 1996 entitled “Farewell to God.”

In 2001, as Charles Templeton neared death, he was interviewed by a reporter about his life.

And when asked if he had any regrets about rejecting Christianity, he simply replied...

“I miss Jesus.”

And when I hear of those stories, it breaks my heart.

Even hear in this passage where we see these unbelieving Pharisees.

Even though they are filled with unbelief.

I grieve when I read that Jesus turned and went away from them.

That is heartbreaking, even though they are clearly rejecting Him.

I will tell you this with all seriousness.

Don't give Jesus a reason to turn his back upon you this morning by rejecting the light that He has brought into the world.

Don't be a hater of the light.

Instead repent of your sin, and trust in the light of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us pray.