

Coming to Faith in Christ

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- [0 : 00] Well, recently I was sharing the gospel with a friend who, it turned out in the end, wasn't that interested in what I was sharing with him.
- And he said this, he said something actually that he really believes, but is very wrong. And he's not alone.
- To kind of get me off of his back, he said to me, he said, listen, he said, I could wake up any morning and I could decide to follow Jesus when I'm ready.
- And I said to him, I said, there's nothing in you that wants to do that. There will be nothing in you that will ever want to do that.
- You will not, on your own, wake up and decide that you're going to follow Jesus. And yet that's a very popular belief.
- [0 : 58] There are people who would even say, oh, I'm going to accept Jesus on my deathbed right before I die or when I get older. That's what I'm going to do. And maybe some here this morning may have the same view that a person can, when he or she is good and ready, make a decision to follow Christ.
- But the witness of scripture is, that is not true. The witness of scripture tells us something that is completely different from that particular view.
- And the passage that we have come to this morning, as we continue our series in the Gospel of Mark, helps us to see that people cannot and therefore will not come to believe in Jesus on their own.
- So if you have not yet turned there, would you turn in your Bible to the Gospel of Mark, chapter 8, and this morning we'll be reading verses 11 through 30. The Gospel of Mark, beginning in verse 11.
- The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him.
- [2 : 16] 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. 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? And do you not remember?
- [3 : 26] 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. And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?

And they said to him, Seven. And he said to them, Do you not yet understand? And they came to Bethsaida, and some people brought to him a blind man, and begged him to touch him.

And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the village. And when he had spit on his eyes, and laid his hands on him, he asked them, Do you see anything? And he looked up and said, I see people, but they look like trees walking.

Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again, and he opened his eyes. His sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. And he sent him to his home, saying, Do not even enter the village.

And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way, he asked his disciples, Who do people say that I am? And when they told him, John the Baptist, and others, and they told him, John the Baptist, and others say, Elijah, and others, one of the prophets.

[5 : 02] And he asked them, But who do you say that I am? Peter answered him, You are the Christ. And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.

Would you bow in prayer with me? Father, we are grateful this morning for the privilege of being able to gather, to lift our hearts in song to you, and to worship you with our giving, to pray to you, and call on your name.

And now, Lord, we have this privilege of being addressed by you from your word. Would you speak to our hearts, Lord?

Lord, help us to comprehend the truth of how men, women, boys, and girls come to put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Would you awaken the words of this text to our hearts? And would you, through the power of your spirit, ask them on our souls so that we might believe your word.

[6 : 17] Lord, we ask that you would do this in Jesus' name. Amen. This section of Mark's gospel that we have come to, we find four scenes in it.

They're different, but they're connected. The first thing we find is the Pharisees coming to Jesus and testing him, saying, give us a sign from heaven. The second scene is the conversation between Jesus and his disciples where he tells them to be aware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.

And his disciples thought that he was reminding them or talking to them about the fact that they did not bring along bread. The third scene we see is this healing, a progressive healing of a blind man.

A very unique healing because it is the, it is not the norm for Jesus. Normally we would see more instantaneous healings with Jesus, but this one, different, is a progressive healing.

And the fourth scene is this account of the great confession of Peter where he confesses that Jesus is the Christ.

[7 : 34] Now, though these seem to be just random events in the ministry of Jesus, I think what would help us to see that these are not random events is to remember that Mark, like the other gospel writers, is telling a story.

They have a purpose in mind. And they all have this common purpose in mind, but they take different approaches to it, and they're all trying to persuade their different audiences about the person of Jesus Christ, who he is, and what his life is all about, and what we see in the case of each of them is they have Jesus dying on the cross.

And for them, it is important for people to understand, who is this man on the cross? And if this man is any ordinary man, if he is no different from the rest of us, well, then his death really is meaningless.

But if he is different, and if he is the person who they say that he is, then his death makes all the difference. And what we see with Mark is Mark begins his gospel account with these words in verse 1 where he says, the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

So Mark identifies Jesus as the Son of God, but what he seeks to do in his gospel is to prove that. And Mark is helping people to see what it means to believe in Jesus, what it means to put faith in Jesus.

[9 : 06] So if we bear that in mind, we will see that Mark is carefully putting his gospel together. And one more thing to remember that helps us to see this is none of the gospel writers tried to write everything that they knew about Jesus.

None of them. As a matter of fact, when John got to the end of his gospel account, he said, if all the things about Jesus were written in the book, he said, the world would not have the space to contain them.

So what Mark is doing is Mark is carefully selecting aspects of the life of Jesus to argue the point about who Jesus really is.

And here's the point that I want us to see as we consider these four scenes that we just read about in Mark's gospel. It's a simple point, but it's a very profound point that the four of these things, I believe, help us to see.

And it is this. Left to ourselves, we cannot see who Jesus truly is. Left to ourselves, we will never see who Jesus is.

[10 : 14] And this is why when my friend said to me he could wake up any morning when he's good and ready and decide to believe in Jesus and decide to follow Jesus, that's not true because what we're going to see this morning is left to ourselves, we cannot see who Jesus is.

I have three very simple points this morning and they are, number one, signs and belief, number two, miracles and belief, and number three, revelation and belief.

So let's consider the first one, signs and belief. I'm sure you've heard people who would claim to be atheists say things like, you know, if God would show me, if God would give me a sign of his existence or about the Bible's truthfulness or about Jesus, then I would really believe.

And the Pharisees were like that. In this first thing that we see in verses 11 through 13, they were asking for a sign from God.

When they said from heaven, that's what they really meant. The Jews were very superstitious in the sense that they would hardly ever want to refer to God and call God's name.

[11 : 31] So when they were saying, give us a sign from heaven, they were arguing with Jesus. Why are you not proving yourself? Give us a sign from heaven.

heaven. And really, what they were essentially saying is you give us a sign and we will be the judges as to whether that is really a sign from God.

Saying to him, essentially, if you're the Messiah, then you should be able to give us some undeniable sign from God. They wanted Jesus to give them a sign from heaven.

And what they were doing by that was essentially they were saying, the other things you have done, healing the sick, casting out devils, raising the dead, feeding thousands of people at one time from a few loaves and a few fish, that's not enough for us.

They were rejecting all of the miracles of Jesus and they wanted something else. They wanted a sign from heaven which they would be judges over. And Mark tells us that Jesus sighed in verse 12.

[12 : 44] He sighed and he said, why does this generation seek a sign? And then he says, truly I tell you, no sign will be given to you. Well, what Jesus was really saying to them, he wasn't saying to them, you won't get any sign.

And we know this from the other accounts, from the accounts of both Matthew and Luke, Jesus was really saying to them, you won't get the sign that you're seeking. You'll get a sign.

But it won't be the sign that you're seeking. And we know that because in Matthew 16 and verse 4, this is what Jesus says, an evil and an adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.

So he left them and departed. So notice what Jesus says. He says two things. Essentially, one, he says, if you're seeking a sign, if in other words, you need something more than what you already have, you're an evil and an adulterous generation.

salvation. And then he also says to them that no sign will be given to them except one sign, which is the sign of Jonah.

[14 : 04] So when we take both Mark's account and Matthew's account into consideration, what Jesus was saying was, the sign you're going to get is the sign of Jonah, but you're not going to get the sign that you want.

Now, exactly what is the sign of Jonah? Jesus was telling them about something future, not something past, because Jonah was thousands of years before them.

So what is the sign of Jonah that Jesus says that they're going to see? Well, we get light about what this sign is. Actually, we are told what this sign is in an earlier account that we read in Matthew's gospel in chapter 12 verses 38 through 41.

And this is what Matthew records. Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, Teacher, we want to see a sign from you. So this seeking of signs was not just a random thing to be seeing in Mark's gospel.

The Pharisees were doing this all the time. We want to see a sign from you, they said. Verse 39, But he answered them, an evil and adulterous generation seeks a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

[15 : 26] For as just 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.

The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah. And behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

What Jesus is saying to them is the only sign that will be given to those who seek a sign is the vivid message of the gospel, the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which comes as a warning to future judgment.

In other words, what he was saying was, what Jonah was to Nineveh, the Son of Man will be to the world. Jonah was to Nineveh saying, be warned, there's a judgment coming if you don't repent, and the Son of Man is saying to the world, be warned, there's a judgment coming if you do not repent.

And so when we consider this this morning, if you or somebody else you know is like the Pharisees, and discounting the Bible, discounting the preaching of the gospel, and asking for some sign, asking for some other means by which you believe that you can believe, except the sign that has already been given, the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, then what Jesus said about that generation will be true of all, that if evil, it is a sign of being unconnected to him at all.

[17 : 27] He's saying that we won't get another sign. He's saying that we would not have some kind of what we would consider data that we could rely on to believe in who he is.

And here's the reason. The reason is, even if a sign were given, it would be impossible for people like you and me, fallen people, to believe, even though many think that they would believe.

I'm sure you've heard people say things like, oh man, if I was living in the day of Jesus, I would follow Jesus. And they forget, there were many people living in the day of Jesus who didn't follow Jesus.

But somehow they think that they're better than those people, that they were present and they saw the miracles and all the other things, that somehow they would believe. But no, being present in the day of Jesus would put us at no greater advantage than we are today in terms of believing in Jesus.

Now, the reason that signs will not bring anyone to faith in Jesus is more clearly seen in the next thing that Mark gives us in verses 14 through 21.

[18 : 53] Mark helps us to see that not even miracles, not even miracles, will bring people to believe in Jesus. So let's consider the second point, miracles and belief.

Jesus denied the Pharisees what they wanted because signs will not bring us to believing in Jesus. So in this second scene, we see Jesus and his disciples in a boat headed for Bethsaida and Mark tells us in verse 15 that Jesus cautioned them and told them to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees the leaven of Herod.

And the disciples immediately started to think about bread because they realized that they didn't bring bread. They only had one loaf in the boat for 13 of them. And so they began discussing, oh my goodness, you know, we didn't bring bread, what are we going to do?

And then Jesus asked them a series of questions. questions. And his questions show us two things. First, the disciples didn't understand what he said when he said, beware the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.

That went over their head. They didn't understand what he was saying. And second, they didn't believe who Jesus was. Those are the two issues behind the questions that Jesus put to them.

[20 : 22] Eight questions he asked them in succession. They didn't understand what he said about the leaven of the Pharisees and Herod, and then they did not really believe who Jesus was.

And as I was studying this, it's a somewhat difficult passage in the sense of what Jesus meant by the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod, because in this text, Jesus doesn't exactly explain what he means.

And I think since the disciples missed it, we should be careful because we could possibly miss it as well. So there are a couple of things I think as we try to understand what Jesus meant when he said to them, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, beware of the leaven of herod.

A couple of things. Number one, whatever it is, whatever this leaven of the Pharisees is, whatever this leaven of herod is, is something that is very dangerous because Jesus warns them about it.

He says, beware of it. And notice that Jesus is not talking about one leaven. And he doesn't say beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Herod.

[21 : 50] He says, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, beware of the leaven of Herod. Now when we think of leaven, we tend to immediately think about yeast, but that was not what the disciples would have understood in that culture.

That's not what it was. Leaven referred to a piece of dough that was leavened, but it's a piece of dough that was leavened, that was, because Jews baked bread regularly, it was a piece of the dough that was left off from the last baking, could be the week before, and they would take that and they would mix it with the new big dough that they were preparing for the current bread, and it was that piece of the dough from the previous batch that caused this new batch to rise, and caused the bread to rise.

And so what Jesus was really talking about was this idea that something so small could affect something so large.

Now normally when we see leaven referred to in scripture, sometimes it's neutral, but normally it points to evil, it points to sin, and it helps us to get the message that sin has this very unsuspecting but far reaching effect.

Just a little of it could do a whole lot of damage. That's what evil is. You don't need a whole lot of sin or a whole lot of evil to corrupt the whole thing. And this is one of the deceptive things that the devil uses even in our own lives to make us think that what we may consider a small sin that we can compromise so that we can manage that and it's not going to affect us in a significant way.

[23 : 46] But the witness of scriptures, that is not true. A little leaven, a little sin will corrupt us if unrepented of, if unchecked.

And this is why Jesus talks about when he says if something offends you cause you to sin, you need to cut it off, you need to get rid of it, you need to be radical with it. You must deal with it, otherwise in the words of Jesus, it could send you to hell wholesale if you don't deal with that small part.

Now again, we get some understanding of what Jesus is talking about from Matthew's account of this same occasion. In Matthew's account we read beginning in Matthew 16 verses 11 through 12, Jesus asked his disciples, how is it that you fail to understand that I did not speak about bread?

Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Now, Matthew's account is only focusing on the one part of it, but Mark picks up both the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.

Verse 12, then they understood that he did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

[25 : 14] So what Jesus was referring to when he talks about leaven is how teaching, the things that we hear others say, can have that same leavening effect in us, that same influential effect in us, though it seems small, it could permeate all that we believe and all that we are.

But again, back in Mark chapter 8, Jesus is warning them about the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.

One insight that we get from Mark's gospel, a little earlier, you may remember this, in Mark chapter 3, Jesus heals this man with a withered hand.

He heals him on the Sabbath day. And the Pharisees were upset. And what we read in Mark 3, verse 6, is the Pharisees went out immediately and held counsel with the Herodians against him how to destroy him.

Now, it's interesting to think about what they did because the Herodians were considered to be traitors. Herodians were those who pledged their allegiance to Herod.

[26 : 31] And Herod was just a figurehead of the Roman government that occupied Israel and controlled the people, and Herod was their figurehead.

And we don't know for sure whether Herod was born a Jew, but Herod was certainly one who was in the Jewish culture. He was raised that way, and he was considered a Jew, but he was considered a Jew who betrayed his people.

And so all the Jews who followed Herod and who believed in Herod and supported Herod, they were Herodians. Pharisees would not have been among them. Orthodox Jews hated the Romans, and they hated anybody who was connected to the Romans.

So when the Pharisees went to this extreme measure to align with the Herodians, it shows the kind of animosity and hatred they had for Jesus.

They had one aim, they wanted to destroy him. And the Herodians, on the other hand, they hated Jesus as well, because Jesus represented a threat to both of them.

[27 : 36] Jesus represented a threat to the religious power of the Pharisees, and he represented a threat to the political power of Herod, and Herod would have known that if things didn't go well for him, if there was unrest, then the Romans would come and remove him out of his place.

And so both the Pharisees and the Herodians, and Herod himself, had this vested interest to fight against Jesus and ensure that Jesus did not make any inroads into the respective powers that they had.

The religious power on the part of the Pharisees, and the political power on the part of Herod and the Herodians.

And these are the two leavens that were rampant in Jewish society in that day. The Pharisees rejected Jesus because Jesus didn't fit the Messiah that they read in the Bible.

They had come up with their own ideas about what Messiah was, and so they rejected Jesus. because of that. And the Herodians, on the other hand, they somehow believed that their hope and their future was tied into political power.

[29 : 02] And they had abandoned the faith of Judaism, and they were pursuing that through Herod and whatever they felt that they could gain by aligning to Him.

And I think Jesus was aware of how the disciples could be influenced and affected by these particular views, and these views, both of these views, blinded people to Jesus and who He was.

Because they were looking for other saviors. They were looking for a savior who would come in the typical way that the Pharisees and other Jews thought He would come, some earthly Messiah to make them great again, and the Herodians who had abandoned all the promises that they saw in God's Word for God's people, and they now aligned with the Romans in that particular way.

And Jesus said to them, you need to be aware of it. And brothers and sisters, I think that warning that Jesus gave to His disciples applies to us as well. It applies to us as well.

Because we could likewise have this view that somehow our hope is in what we can do in our own religious power, in our own influential power as Christians in the world.

[30 : 31] For example, there are people who really believe that the world's problems and all the bad in the world could be fixed. more Christians would just go into politics.

If more Christians would just offer themselves for political office, they really believe that we could change the world. believe that that's the leaven of the Pharisees believing that we can bring some kind of utopia down here on earth.

And it's also the leaven of Herod believing that political power is the road to bringing really what only God himself can bring to us.

and I'm not saying this morning that Christians ought not to serve in politics. Christians ought to be in every sphere of life, every sphere of society.

There is no sphere of society that's off limits for Christians. But we should never believe that that is our hope. We should never believe that we can bring to pass what only God through Christ and his righteous rule and his righteous government can actually bring to us.

[31 : 51] Now that's my best attempt at trying to understand what Jesus meant by these two leavens, the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod. And you may have a different view.

I offer that just for my own studies but not in any dogmatic way. But here's the point this morning. Whatever you believe about the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod, that's not the main point of verses 14 through 21.

That's a side point. That's not the main point. The main point of this passage that Mark wants us to see is surrounding the questions that Jesus asked his disciples about the feeding of the 5,000 and the feeding of the 4,000.

Look at what he says in verse 15. Sorry, in verse 19. He said to them, when I broke the five loaves for the 5,000, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?

And they said to him, 12. And the seven for the 4,000, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up? And they said to him, seven.

[33 : 13] And he said to them, do you not yet understand? I mean, think about that. Jesus has miraculously fed 5,000 and 4,000 people on two separate occasions.

these disciples were the ones who assisted him with it and they actually picked up the pieces.

12 baskets on one occasion, seven on another occasion. If there was any miracle that they should have watched, it seems to me that these two miracles are the only two miracles of Jesus where the disciples were intricately involved in it, all the others they observed.

They watched Jesus do what he did. And even after Jesus would have multiplied the bread on these two occasions, miraculously, and the fish, when they did not remember to bring bread, they get worried.

they get worried. It's almost like they ran out of the window. It's almost as if what Jesus did on those two occasions that they participated in, this is not watching some other people pick up the crumbs and seeing all this stuff.

[34 : 41] No, they took the bread, gave it to the people, then they picked up the crumbs, ran this all over. And here's the point.

despite that, they still did not see Jesus for who he was, and they still did not believe in Jesus. They still did not put their faith in Jesus.

Consider, for example, Judas. Judas would have been one of the ones who participated in these miracles. He would have been there.

He was treasurer. Judas would have seen sicknesses healed and demons cast out and the storm calmed and the dead raised.

And again, he would have seen these miraculous feelings. Still didn't believe. he still did not believe.

[35 : 51] And you would have thought that again, if there are two miracles that would have affected these disciples to see and bring them to faith in Jesus, it would have been these two miraculous feedings.

But miracles didn't bring them to faith. Miracles will not bring anyone to faith in Jesus. But still today we have people crying out, oh, the church needs more miracles.

The church needs more healings. And you have some ministers who go and they try to set up their entire ministry around healing and they get on television, they parade people around doing all sorts of things, believing that if you have a lot of miracles, you'll have a lot of people believing in Jesus.

You certainly can gather large crowds as Jesus did. But when Jesus died, there could only be found 120 in the upper room. And he told them, go there and wait for the promise from the Father, but only 120 of the countless thousands who would have followed him really showed up.

And the point is that no miracle, no matter how great, no matter how spectacular, can bring anyone to saving faith in Jesus Christ.

[37 : 05] Miracles, will not and cannot cause you or me to believe. And we see this in a dramatic way with these disciples, where Jesus would say to them, you still don't understand.

The sealing of the blind man in verses 20 through 26 is a fitting illustration of the spiritual blindness of the disciples as it relates to Jesus.

And Mark recounts for us how this blind man is brought to Jesus. People say to him, touch him, just put your hand on him and touch him. And Mark says Jesus does something other than what they requested.

He takes the man out of the village, spits on his eyes, and then evidently it says he laid his hands on him, but from the text we can see that he obviously laid his hands on his eyes because when he asked the man can you see, what do you see?

The man says, I see people, but they look like trees walking. And then Mark says Jesus put his hands on his eyes again, meaning he had put his hands on his eyes the first time and the second time the man was able to see clearly and everything was restored.

[38 : 29] Then Jesus does something very surprising. Jesus, we're told in verse 26, sent the man home saying to him, don't even go into the village.

Now we could read a lot into that, but here's one thing that's very clear about what Jesus did. It is very clear that Jesus had no desire to use the healing of that man to get people in Bethsaida to follow him.

And notice, I didn't say to believe in him because miracles won't cause you to believe, to follow him. There's many people who follow Jesus who didn't believe in Jesus.

They follow for all kinds of reasons, this spectacular show of the miracles and the demons being cast out, or maybe they had a person need themselves. But Jesus, if this was some of the people we know who traffic in this kind of thing, when I say traffic in it, I mean who use the show of miracles, get on TV and parade a person up and down, take their crutch away from them and say, look, see, see, see, and people go, yay.

No, Jesus wasn't into that. And please hear me this morning. I believe that Jesus is saying yesterday, today, and forever. I believe that what God has done, that God can and does do.

[40 : 01] I believe that miracles still do happen today, but what I'm saying is that God does those not to get anybody to believe, does those in his own sovereign providence for his own sovereign reasons, but they're not to bring anyone to saving faith, because no amount of miracles, no matter how great, can bring anyone to saving faith.

And Jesus was not interested in taking this man, who he had healed, back for people to see him. But this man's gradual healing, where he couldn't see and then he saw, it seems like Mark is perhaps alluding to the blindness of the disciples.

Before I move on to the next point, let me just say one more thing about why all these miracles were in the ministry of Jesus. These miracles were in the ministry of Jesus as the fulfillment of prophecy that this is what Messiah will do when he comes.

Not to bring people to saving faith, but to show that this is the fulfillment of prophecy when the Messiah comes. For example, in Isaiah 35, verses 4 through 6, this is what Isaiah prophesies.

Say to those who have an anxious heart, be strong, fear not. Behold, your God will come with vengeance and with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.

[41 : 42] Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the heirs of the death unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap like a deer and the tongue of the mute shall sing for waters break forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert.

Well, when did this happen? This happened when Messiah came. This happened when Jesus came. It happened in the ministry of Jesus. God came. When Isaiah says, behold, he will come and he will save you.

God came in the person of his son and the eyes of the blind were opened, the ears of the deaf weren't stopped, and the legs of the lame were healed.

I think the obvious question would then be, well, if signs from heaven can't bring people to saving faith in Christ, and miracles can't bring people to saving faith in Christ, what then can bring people to saving faith in Christ?

And there's one thing. There's only one thing. There's only one thing that would bring people to saving faith in Jesus Christ, and that is divine revelation from God himself.

[43 : 02] Divine revelation from God as to who Jesus is. And that's what we see in the final scene in our text for this morning in verses 27 through 30, which is the last point, revelation and belief.

What we see in verses 27 through 30 is this account of Peter and his great confession. They were on their way to Caesarea Philippi. Jesus said to them, who do people say that I am?

And what they did was they basically gave the popular views. We saw these views back in chapter 6 when Herod had these views and those around Herod had these views.

And they said, well, some say that you're John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and some say one of the prophets. And then Jesus turns it in a direct way to them.

Who do you say that I am? Now think about that. It would not be right for any one of us to know that somebody believes something, to know that they believe it, and then question them about what they believe.

[44 : 13] Jesus questioned them because he knew they didn't believe. He questioned them because though they had been with him, they had seen his miracles, they didn't believe who he was.

And so he says to them, who do you say that I am? And Mark tells us that only one of them answered. Peter answered and Peter said, you're the Christ.

promised, or you're the Messiah. You're the promised one. You're the one who God promised will come and will save his people. You'd come into the world as God's king, and you would save God's people.

Mark says it rather abruptly in verse 29, where he says, Peter simply says, you're the Christ, but again, Matthew's account of it says a bit more.

So here's what Matthew's account says. In Matthew 16, verses 16 through 17, Simon Peter replied, you are the Christ, the son of the living God. Jesus answered him, blessed are you, Simon bar Jonah, Simon, son of Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my father who is in heaven.

[45 : 38] flesh and blood did not reveal it to you. What was Jesus really saying? Jesus says, Peter. Well, first of all, the 11 didn't say anything.

Peter comes over the right hand and says, Jesus says, Peter, that's not your conviction. The father revealed that to you. And even after the father revealed it to Peter, at this point, it still wasn't his conviction.

we know that in the next two verses, which we'll cover in the next sermon in Mark, if you look at verses 31 through 34, Jesus begins to teach the disciples at this pivotal moment.

Then he is identified by the father, by the revelation of the father, that he is the Christ. He then begins to say to them, the Christ must suffer, he must be killed. And what does the one who got the revelation say?

Not so. Be it far from you, for that would happen to you. And Jesus rebukes him and Jesus says, get behind me, Satan.

[46 : 48] It wasn't Peter's conviction about who Jesus was. If Peter was convinced about who Jesus was, that he was the Messiah, he had the belief that he needed, he wouldn't be preventing Jesus from going the way Messiah had to go.

But all this is to show that Peter's revelation, his words, were God's revelation, not his own, not his own conviction. But what we see is that the only way that Jesus is seen to be who he is, is by divine revelation from the Father.

Now think about that. If there's anyone who would be able, humanly speaking, away from God's revelation, to see Jesus for who he is, it should have been these 12 disciples.

But they couldn't. They couldn't. No signs could have done it. No miracles could have done it. Only the revelation that comes from God.

I remember a number of years ago, we were in Christianity Explored, and there was a wonderful lady who attended, and a very moral person, but she would acknowledge that she was not a Christian, and we were talking about what it means to believe in Jesus, and she was firm that she believed in Jesus, and that other people believed in Jesus as well, who she would acknowledge didn't serve Jesus.

[48 : 18] And I said to her, I said, well, think about that. I said, if you really believe in Jesus, if you really believe in him, don't you think, that you would submit your life to him, and truly serve him, and truly trust in him, if you truly believed in him.

And she paused, and I never forget the look on her face, she said, you know what, you're right. And what it came down to is that many people believe that believing in Jesus is accepting these words that we find in the Bible.

So for the typical Bahamian who has come through the school system that we have, where you have to study the Gospels and study some of Paul's letters, we have this data and we say, I believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

Yeah, I believe, and we can recite these things, but it's not a hard conviction. It's not the kind of belief that enables us to lay our lives in the hands of Jesus and live for him and serve him.

And brothers and sisters, that kind of belief only comes by a revelation from God himself, to enable us to see Jesus as a trustworthy Messiah in whom we can put our trust and to whom we can submit our lives and that we will live for him and that we will serve him.

[49 : 46] We used to sing a song in the church I grew up in, open my eyes, Lord, I want to see Jesus. As I was preparing, I was reminded of that song because it's so true.

If God doesn't open our eyes, we will never see Jesus, even though we read about him in the pages of scripture, even though we hear people talk about him. God must open our eyes.

And here's the larger truth about it. It's not just that God needs to kind of like give us some data and we can believe. No, the revelation of who Jesus is, is a part of the greater work of salvation that God does.

Where God brings us from death to life spiritually, where God opens our eyes in a real sense of coming from being with our eyes closed in death to our eyes opened in spiritual life.

If you follow the gospel account, you will find that Peter, not too long after, because they were on their way to Jerusalem where Jesus was going to be betrayed and crucified. And Peter would deny Jesus three times in one night.

[51 : 00] even after saying, you're the Christ. Why? It wasn't his conviction. But after Jesus rose from the dead, he appeared to his disciples and the Bible says he breathed on them in John chapter 20 and said, receive the Holy Spirit.

God and sure enough, the Holy Spirit did come and on the day of Pentecost and the church began and we see the boldness of these disciples who were not just going on some cognitive information about who Jesus was, but they were so persuaded that he was the second person of the Godhead, that he was the Messiah who came and they would give their lives in his service.

And what historians tell us is that the same Peter would die by being crucified. And when he was being crucified, he said to those crucifying him, he said, I'm not worthy to be crucified the way my Lord was crucified.

Crucify me upside down. There was no longer just something the Father revealed to him that was in his conviction and that became his own conviction and that became his conviction because he had experienced what we all have to experience in order to come to faith, to come to this kind of faith where we would entrust our lives to the Lord Jesus.

But God does something radical in our lives. That's the only way that we can believe. Something radical must happen. And that word radical means to the root.

[52 : 49] Something to the root of our lives has to happen where God has to make us a new person. He's to give us a new birth. He's to bring us from that old man to a new man in Christ.

And it is only through that experience which God does that we will believe and that we will trust in the Lord Jesus. and if we don't have that experience what we could find is that we could be following Jesus while not believing in Jesus as so many did during his earthly life.

And here's what they should do for us this morning. Those of us who have put our trust in Jesus we should we should be amazed and we should be humble.

We should be amazed at the salvation of God that he has brought to pass in our lives.

This faith in Jesus that we could never even if we were present with Jesus even if we had seen all that the disciples saw would never bring us to faith.

[54 : 06] But God has brought this reality of saving faith about in our lives. And it's humbling because we realize that the only thing that we bring as Martin Luther says is us then.

We come empty handed we bring nothing at all to our salvation. And what this should do for us this morning even as we think of others who don't know Jesus Christ this should cause us to have a deeper conviction about the need to share the gospel.

About the need for people to hear the gospel. Thank God for miracles. Thank God for them when they happen. Thank God for healings and everything else that he does in a supernatural way.

But brothers and sisters there's only one thing that will bring people to saving faith and that is the gospel of Jesus Christ. his death his burial and his resurrection.

Jesus says that's the sign. He says that's the sign that you are going to receive. And that's the only way that we come to believe.

[55 : 19] If you're here this morning and you don't know Jesus Christ as Lord and personal Savior I want to say to you the deception of the devil will be to get you to go after some substitutes.

They say stop doing that and start doing this and clean your life up. But none of that will bring you to saving faith in Jesus Christ. I encourage you if you are aware this morning that you believe all this data you believe this information but you know that you're not living your life for Jesus.

You know that you've not entrusted your life to him. I just encourage you this morning to ask the Lord do that radical work in me. that I may put my faith in Jesus that I may truly live for him as the evidence that I truly believe in him.

Let's pray together.