

Where's My Lunch?

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[0 : 0 0] Hello, everybody. You all right? Everyone's well? Good. Nice to see you. My name is Aaron. If you are new, I'm the minister for the service, and I'd love to meet you. Come and say hi.

That'd be great. So look, we're in Matthew 16 this evening, and it's a big passage, and there's tons and tons and tons of stuff in there. So let me tell you from the outset, like I left five pages of my sermon just on the steps over there because I thought I was going to say too much. I'll tell you what I'm not going to talk about tonight. I'm not going to talk about when Jesus says, on this rock, I'll build my church, probably the most acrimonious sort of passage in the Bible in terms of what interpretations. I'm not going to talk about the keys of the kingdom, binding and loosing. Happy to chat to you that afterwards if you're interested in that kind of stuff. What I do want to focus on this evening is all the wrongheaded people in the passage, because I think that's a key theme in the passage. There's a lot of wrongheaded people in this passage today, a lot of distracted minds, which is sort of a shock after last week. You remember, if you're here last week, we had this amazing Canaanite woman who was asking Jesus for mercy for her daughter, and she gets Jesus. Jesus speaks to her, and she gets him, and she trusts him, and it's a beautiful story. And then we have this week. So the structure is simply, I'm just going to walk through the passage. Does that sound okay? Great. Let's go. Let's do it then. So Jesus is approached by some Pharisees and some Sadducees. If you don't know much about the ancient Near East, this is quite an unlikely alliance, these two groups. They're sort of like two different political parties, sort of like today. So the two groups that didn't normally get along with each other, they disagreed politically, they disagreed theologically, but they both hated Jesus. And so that brought them together.

And they approached Jesus, and they said, do one of your things. Show us something. Do one of your, you know, do one of your tricks. Show us what you got. Perform for us.

We're not expected to think that this is a genuine request. They're not genuinely searching. We know that one of the reasons we know, a couple of reasons. First one is this word test in verse 1. It says they came to test him. This test word, go back a few chapters, the devil, Jesus are in the desert.

This is the devil tempted Jesus. That's the same word. So it's a fairly damning connection that the author makes Matthew here. The devil was testing Jesus. The religious elites were testing Jesus. Do one of your things. Let's see if you're real. Let's see if you've got what it takes. The thing is, no matter what Jesus would have done, they wouldn't have believed him.

[2 : 5 5] They wouldn't have trusted him. We know this because Jesus had already done a ton of stuff, incredible things, and they were not interested. How sad Jesus says it is. How ridiculous Jesus says it is to them that you can read the weather, but you can't read the signs of something wonderful happening right now. And why is that? Why couldn't they read that? Why weren't they open to Jesus?

Because they had brought an already formed opinion to the evidence. The disciples turn up after this, and Jesus is thinking about his discussion he's just had with the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

And so he says to the disciples, in verse 6 he says, hey, hey, hey, beware the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Beware the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Now leaven, if you don't know, is yeast. So yeast is this thing you put in bread and it makes it big. So it's this invisible thing that causes this big reaction that spreads. It's kind of a play on words or it's a picture. It's kind of like if you had a really toxic work environment and it was really unhealthy and it was all the result of like one person who was just really unhealthy mentally and, you know, was just kind of caustic.

And their attitude spread throughout the office. It's kind of like that kind of thing. So Jesus is talking though about the teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees. He used that word leaven, but he's talking about the teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees and saying it spreads.

And saying, it says, beware of it. Guys, guys, listen. Beware the leaven of the religious leaders. And verse 7, the disciples are like, yeah, leaven. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. We totally forgot bread, didn't we? We totally, we totally forgot to bring the bread. Who was in charge of lunch? Who was in charge of lunch? We've got no lunch. We've got nothing to eat. Now it's not on the text, but I imagine Jesus facepalmed right at this point, you know. Now how does Jesus respond to this? Two ways. The first one is he sort of deals with the food stuff. And he's like, come on.

[5 : 17] I just, I literally just fed 4,000 people with some kid's lunchbox. And a little while before that, I fed 5,000 people with hardly anything and there was tons of leftovers. So in terms of food, you're probably going to be okay. But that's not what I'm talking about. He says in verse 8, are you really talking about bread right now? Because that's not actually what I'm talking about when I say beware the leaven. It's a figure of speech. I'm saying beware the religious leaders' teaching. And why should they beware of it? What's wrong with it? Well, the Bible is at pains to make it clear that the Pharisees' disbelief was irrational. It was an irrational disbelief. All the signs were there. And they were the religious experts and they should have known who Christ was, yet they believed something else. They believed

Jesus was a magician or something, despite the evidence. Nothing Jesus would have done would have convinced them. They brought a pre-made decision to the evidence. And Jesus says, watch out for these guys. Their ideas can be polluting. Their way of thinking, it's muddled.

It's dishonest. Now, what's that got to do with us? Because we don't have Sadducees or Pharisees today, do we? That we have to beware of. There is a lot of talk in this passage all the way through and continuing on to next week about thinking. Jesus says to his disciples, when they sort of start thinking about their lunch, he says, don't you remember though? And don't you perceive this though? Or do you not understand? And it's this implicit warning that we can get really off track in the way we think about who Christ is. Now again, we don't have Sadducees or Pharisees.

So what do we have that we can be wary of? What do we have that we have to be quite careful of in terms of how we think about it? Well, I'll give you one example. Is it I, Kaffa, talk about politics right now? Okay, great. So let's consider politics for a moment. So there is right and there's left.

And both sides have a, it is, it's a secular vision. It is an ideology. It's a plan. It's a plan of attack that will make the world better, right? So you have these two competing visions for the state.

[8 : 12] And I've been, I've been listening to some stuff about this recently. I think I found it really fascinating. So let me share it with you. So as humans, we are, we're going to have a personal tendency to go left or right, of course, right? And that's fine. We have a sort of internal bias.

So here's the thing. Let's say we lean politically left. Left. And we might do that because we say, you know what? The left has, it incorporates things that seem to be important to Jesus. Mercy, justice, and equity. It's wonderful stuff.

And you can dive into that. And you dive deeper and deeper and deeper. And then sometimes, sometimes, it can go places you don't want to go. It can go to a radically different sex ethic.

It can go to sort of a real anti-authority stance. Now, perhaps we lean politically right. The danger might be that you are really aghast, agog at the left, right? Agenda. And so you go online and you're reading counter-arguments to sort of progressive liberalism. And it's so winsome and it's funny and it just seems to make sense. And you dive deeper and deeper and deeper and deeper and deeper. And then hidden in some crevice over here is white nationalism.

What am I saying? We don't have these powerful religious groups, Pharisees and Sadducees anymore running the show. But what we do have is we have competing visions. We have the new religion in the world, which seems to me to be politics. And it's very easy for us as Christians to drift into alliances and get caught up in things that have some quite unhealthy aspects to them, left and right. Now, I don't think I'm overstating this because I have actually seen friends convert from Christianity to a political agenda. I know people that have renounced their faith for a secular political agenda, which they think has a better chance of changing the world. And what happens is people tend to think, and they sort of go, you know what, I actually don't think we need Jesus to live out Christ's vision of justice and kindness and equity. And it's the irony of the whole thing is that they want the kingdom stuff. They actually want the Christian vision for the world, but without

[10 : 35] Christ. They want the kingdom without the king. And there's a whole lot of false narratives sort of tied into it about the nature of evil and the whole story of the world.

And what's really interesting about our, the world right now, actually, like right now, we're at this quite unique moment where some of the narratives, which have flawed narratives in these ideologies, these secular ideologies, there's cracks starting to form.

Both left and right. You think about the two great democracies of the world. The two most powerful democracies in the world, Britain and America, they're in trouble, right? Actually, Canada's not doing too great, to be honest. But think about the great institutions that shape our story. Silicon Valley and Wall Street and Hollywood increasingly are being exposed as detached and corrupt. And these, these are things that really do shape our story quite profoundly. And they're shown to be broken. And I think people are starting to see that. All that to say, that's a very extended example to say this, beware the leaven. Because we have a better story. Secularism is showing itself to be a fragile thing. Beware the leaven. You know, think about, think about the stories you're listening to. Think about the ideologies you are buying into. Now, I'm not saying be disengaged from politics. I think Christians should be the most engaged in politics. We should be very involved. But we should think very critically, though. And remember where our allegiance is, and remember where our hope lies. Let's move on. So I see there's a lot of wrongheadedness in our passage. Let's have a look at verse 13 in this last section. So, so far we've seen the disciples are just, you know, their minds in their stomachs. The Pharisees have brought a decision to the evidence.

And then Matthew 13, we have this lovely, this lovely sort of couple of verses here. Jesus says to his disciples, who do people say that the Son of Man is? That's how Jesus describes himself. And they say, some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, others say Jeremiah, one of the prophets. There's various reasons we won't get into about why people say these things. They're not terrible answers, but they fall woefully short, don't they, in terms of who Christ actually is. And then verse 15, Jesus presses the group. And he says, okay, that's what they think. What do you think? Because essentially those answers are wrongheaded. What do you think? Who do you say I am? And Peter says this, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. That's amazing, isn't it? You are the Christ. You are the one who God promised he would send to rescue us.

Jesus responds, blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. Flesh and blood didn't reveal this to you. You didn't think the stuff up yourself. I wonder how Peter thought he came to this conclusion. I wonder what that scene was like. Peter blurts this out, and everyone sort of looks around going, where did that come from?

[14 : 15] However, Jesus wants us to be very clear that what Peter said was a gift. It was a revelation.

It's a beautiful example of our God who bends down to us and makes himself known to us. He's placing in Peter's mind, his confused mind, a dark mind, a self-interested mind.

He places in Peter's mind the best thing a person can know. The very best thing a person can know. You are the Christ. Folks, when we come to faith, we must relinquish any sense of merit. Any sense of, I'm a clever chap. I came to this conclusion. Those people over there are just awful. They're not as humble and as carefully thought out as I am. We've got to relinquish any attitude like that. Faith, if you can say this, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God, that's a divine disclosure.

[15 : 36] You have been given an immeasurable gift. Let me finish up here. There are a lot of confused people in our passage today. The religious elites who reject Jesus despite the evidence, despite the signs, because their minds are cemented.

And the disciples who are with the King of the universe, he's just done these amazing things. He says these amazing words and he's trying to teach them something and they're like, yeah, where's my lunch? I forgot my lunch. What am I doing?

And Jesus, in his great kindness, puts the most amazing truth in Peter's brain. I am the Christ. And if you are here and you're a Christian, Jesus has done this for you.

He's done this for you. He's done this for me. And I'm so grateful. He has caused me to trust in the most stable and the most beautiful thing in the universe.

Without it, we are hopeless and lost, trusting in things which have shown themselves to be fragile. Amen.

[16 : 55] Amen.