

## A SENSE OF HISTORY

Mark 8:11-21

Key Verse: 8:19

"`When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?' `Twelve,' they replied."

Last Sunday we studied Psalm 1 right after ten marriages so that we could [meditate](#) on the word of God day and night. As a result, we could plant one word of God in our hearts. The method of Bible writing is for the peak of human civilization, that is the 21st century. So it is easy to understand, but to let the word of God take root and grow up and be fruitful is very difficult. On the other hand, Confucius' books were all written in sophisticated Chinese letters, which were hieroglyphic or pictographic letters. So Chinese people did not understand what they meant. For example, they describe man as follows: There is one big pole which is standing at a forty [degree](#) slant; then a small pole supports it. Chinese people thought that human beings were in essence, weak. So they needed someone who could be a suitable helper. In China, even though one is fifty years old, if he is not married, he is called "boy," because he has no supporting pole. Chinese people did not understand their written characters well except for an absolute minority of people. Their way of teaching was to give [students](#) a book and let them read, following after a teacher, and let them read again and again until they understood the meaning. So Confucius' people learned Confucius' teachings by heart because they memorized them and indoctrinated and planted them during the time of memorizing. But modern language written by understatement is so easy to read. So people do not meditate on it. Somebody talks about the Bible and another says, "I know, I know, I know that." It is the general response of modern people to the Bible. But Psalm 1 says the blessed are those who are planted by streams of water and meditate on the word of God day and night. This tells us a very deep life philosophy and destiny of mankind. But those who just pass over the word of God become like chaff and finally they have no root. They are doomed to be blown by the winds to nowhere. Let's meditate on even one word of God, not from our minds, but from our hearts, so that it may be planted and be fruitful. We really thank God that our God wrote the Bible in a way that even a child can read and understand it instead of writing it in hieroglyphics. Today's passage mainly teaches us a sense of history. Today's passage is too short and too obvious; there seems to be not much to think about. But it teaches us a sense of history. Animals do not have a sense of history. The universe does not have a sense of history because it is moving around as God made it in the beginning. But man needs a sense of history because man is made in the image of God plus the dust of the ground.

### I. The malicious Pharisees (11-13)

Look at verse 11. "The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven." They saw with their own eyes Jesus feeding the four thousand several ten minutes ago. But they asked Jesus to perform a sign from heaven. Verse 11 says it was to test Jesus. They knew that Jesus performed a miracle feeding the four thousand with seven loaves several ten minutes ago, but they asked him for a sign from heaven. It shows that they denied the factual evidence proved by four thousand people and the twelve disciples and Jesus. They denied

such tremendous evidence and they asked Jesus to perform a miracle from heaven. It was self-deception. It was proof that they were illiterate. It was proof that they had eyes but they were spiritually blind.

What did Jesus say? Look at verse 12. "He sighed deeply and said, 'Why does this generation ask for a miraculous sign? I tell you the truth, no sign will be given to it.'" They made Jesus very sorrowful because they intentionally wanted to test Jesus, ignoring the crystal clear evidence of feeding the four thousand with seven loaves. Jesus was very sorry that his people were so ignorant and they were also not at all teachable people. They came to destroy the messianic work of God intentionally, suppressing the truth. Look at verse 13. "Then he left them, got back into the boat and crossed to the other side." Jesus avoided these political Pharisees and went across the lake. Jesus was refreshed by the sea breeze and at the same time, his heart was darkened when he thought about the Pharisees asking for another sign after he performed the sign of feeding the four thousand with the seven loaves. Jesus was sorry that his chosen people became spiritually blind. Jesus was sorry that his chosen people did not see the messianic ministry of Jesus coming down to the earth. Jesus was sorry about their sheer hypocrisy as a chosen people. Jesus was sorry because they should be the servants of God, but they wanted to test the Son of God, the God Almighty.

## II. The disciples' "instant" mentality (14-16)

Look at verse 14. "The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat." Jesus' beloved disciples always had an "instant" mentality. So they had never worried about anything. If they had food, they ate the food. Then they didn't eat. But they hoped that when Jesus established the earthly messianic kingdom they would be somebodies. In the case of St. Peter, he had already fancied enough about his Prime Minister's global desk. Right after feeding the four thousand with seven loaves, they should understand Jesus' deep compassion for his people. They must understand Jesus lifting up seven loaves to heaven and praying to feed the four thousand (8:6). They should have rejoiced that they coworked with Jesus by letting the people sit down and distributing enough bread. Now the boat was in the middle of the lake. Suddenly, they felt hungry. Actually, the least-eating disciples ate five portions. Then instantly they began to worry about bread to eat in between dinner and the next morning's breakfast. They checked where bread was again and again. But they could find only one loaf which Andrew hid in his pants around his belly button. They regretted that they were so forgetful. They could have loaded the leftover seven basketfuls in the boat. But they forgot. Anyway, a serious problem occurred among them. Peter rebuked Bartholomew severely, "You didn't work so much while Jesus fed the four thousand with seven loaves. So at least you should have carried in the leftover seven basketfuls so that we might not worry and could eat deliciously." James and John rebuked Peter, "You are strong as a fisherman. So you could have brought the seven basketfuls of bread. Why do you rebuke helpless Bartholomew?" Then Bartholomew's morale was restored and together James and John and Bartholomew attacked Peter the fisherman. Finally, deep-sleeping Matthew and Thomas were awakened by the commotion of their dispute. Matthew rebuked Peter by saying, "If you asked me to pick up seven basketfuls of loaves I could have done that. But you didn't say anything, looking at me blankly." Then the other disciples agreed, "That's right. That's right. It's Peter's fault."

### III. Jesus' simple review of history lesson (17-21)

Look at verses 17-20. "Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: 'Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?' 'Twelve,' they replied. 'And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?' They answered, 'Seven.'" When we read these verses, we find that first Jesus rebuked them for being too nervous about the fact that they didn't bring the leftover bread to eat in between dinner and the next morning's breakfast. Jesus also rebuked them by saying, "Why are you talking about having no bread?" Jesus rebuked them even more severely that their hearts were hardened. Jesus also rebuked them by saying, "Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember?" In short, Jesus performed so many miracles before his disciples. After his inauguration as the Messiah of the world through John's baptism (1:10), Jesus began his earthly messianic ministry. Compared to other gospels, Mark emphasized the calling of the first disciples. Jesus said, "The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" (1:15) Next, Jesus drove out an evil spirit from a man in the synagogue (1:26). Jesus had no time to rest or eat regularly. The same suffering passed on to his disciples. Jesus had attempted to find a resort place four times thus far (4:35; 5:21; 6:31; 7:24). He completely failed. Each time they arrived at a resort place, a Gerasene demoniac waited for them, or a needy and helpless crowd got there ahead of them and welcomed them by saying, "Good morning, sir! How are you, sir! You are good, sir." Jesus healed a paralytic in chapter 2. Jesus calmed the storm by rebuking the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still." (4:39) In Mark's Gospel, up to chapter 8, Jesus performed so many miracles. All the village people knew very well that Jesus healed the sick and preached the gospel. Moreover, they knew that Jesus was the Son of God because of the indomitable compassion in his soul.

Therefore, the disciples should not worry before Jesus that they had only one loaf. They should have believed that they were with Jesus, and Jesus would feed them. In short, they should have had faith in God Almighty. But they all became mental patients in an instant because of anxiety and future security. Of course, to them it was natural to worry that they had only one loaf and there were many people in the boat. But to Jesus, they didn't remember Jesus who fed the five thousand with five loaves and two fish. They also did not remember that Jesus fed four thousand with seven loaves. He satisfied all the people and sent them away. The disciples were with the Son of God Almighty who performed miracles. But they completely forgot who Jesus was. They completely forgot that Jesus performed miracles. One time, Jesus fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fish. The other time, Jesus fed four thousand people with seven loaves. These were shocking events that the disciples could not forget in their lifetimes. They were mysterious events; the disciples should have found the spiritual meaning of feeding the five thousand and the four thousand and they should have had a glimpse of a sense of history. But they forgot completely. How completely? They forgot five thousand people were fed with five loaves and two fish and four thousand people were fed with seven loaves. Their I.Q. was around

a three or four-year-old level. Actually, it was not. The disciples had their own hope in Jesus that Jesus would establish an earthly kingdom of God. Each of them precisely calculated what he would be and how to make his speech and how his table manners should be. There was a problem that they had no idea about Jesus' teaching. They could not understand what Jesus had done. Look at verse 18. "Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember?" This verse is a quotation of Isaiah and at the same time the exact description of the sorrow of Jesus toward his disciples and stubborn, sinful people's attitude. Jesus should dismiss the twelve disciples and start all over again. It would be much better. They were too illiterate. They were too stubborn. They were men of fancy in spite of the fact that they were all from the blue-collar class. Usually, in a university or college, professors try to help students or TA's and RA's to make success and reach their goals. But when the advisor professors lose hope, they dismiss TA's or RA's. Of course, there are many unusual cases. There was one student who had been in a philosophy of history course. But he could not obtain a Ph.D. in philosophy, so he shot his advisor and himself. This might be the situation between Jesus and his disciples.

Jesus is the Son of God and he is Almighty God. So he, in his divinity, began to reeducate them. Look at verse 19. "When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" Peter answered, "One hundred twenty, Sir." James stood up and said, "No, Sir. It was twelve baskets, Sir." Jesus asked them, "When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" Jesus asked the same question to each disciple, altogether twelve times, in order to teach a sense of history. But they looked as if their eyes were bloodshot and they were secretly yawning. They didn't accept Jesus' history teaching in this way.

It was the time Jesus should have abandoned them and thrown them into the lake as a fisherman throws the net. Look at verse 20. "And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" This question was repeated twelve times at the same place. Jesus had a burning heart to teach a sense of history to his disciples. But his disciples had bloodshot eyes and were making a lot of growling noises. In a small space they stayed too long for a history lesson. The air pollution rate was too high because they emitted strong gas endlessly. But Jesus was getting stronger and stronger in teaching them a sense of history.

Jesus asked them, "When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" This time, Jesus asked Peter. He answered, "Twelve, Sir." Such a vigorous Peter answered with a mosquito voice. Then Jesus asked, "When I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" This time Jesus asked James. Spontaneously, James and John stood up and answered, "Seven, Sir! We are better than Peter the fisherman, Sir." Jesus asked again, "When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" This time, he asked Matthew. Matthew was the former Levi, the tax collector. He took out of his pocket a calculator, and after five minutes said, "Twelve basketfuls, and one was not picked up and was rolling on the ground, Sir." Jesus asked this time, "When I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" This time,

Jesus asked Bartholomew. Bartholomew answered with a baritone voice, "Seven, Sir!" Jesus' history lesson to plant the sense of history was intense; he proved that he is the Son of God Almighty. If all Russian kids are educated in this way, Russia will be the only superpower nation in the world even one time in history.

These days, there are so many university buildings and college buildings and all kinds of educational institution buildings in America. But students' attitude of study and progress of study is not frequently mentioned. Students' evildoing events are mentioned. Here we learn from Jesus that we must be like Jesus. The miracles about the five loaves and two fish feeding five thousand and the seven loaves feeding four thousand were so simple and easy. But Jesus indoctrinated them into the hearts of his disciples until they might not forget them in their lifetimes. This must be our teachers' attitude. Teachers are not salary men. Teachers are teachers who are noble and are responsible for the future of this nation by teaching young kids in the way Jesus taught them.

One day Sammy A. Lee was attending Gordon Tech High School. He had an appendix operation and missed school for one week. Then a Jesuit teacher asked him to come every morning at 5:30 a.m. and helped him catch up what he missed during the previous week. What a beautiful imitation of Jesus! What a Jesuit, who has the attitude of a teacher.

Our parents are mostly from the hippie generation. But they must be mindful of their children. Our parents must teach their children that they trust in God in the morning. And in the evening, before going to bed, they must gather together and thank God for living in God's world happily by God's grace. American parents' attitude in teaching and babysitting their children must be like Jesus teaching his disciples about the five loaves and two fish and the seven loaves feeding four thousand until they were satisfied. Parents should not omit praying together with their children even for a day. If they miss praying with their children even for a day, that's not pleasing to God; it is spiritual sin before God.

#### IV. The yeast of the Pharisees and Herod (14-21)

We must think about why the Bible scholars subtitled this passage, "The yeast of the Pharisees and Herod." Let's review briefly the history of Israel. God delivered the people of Israel from the hand of Pharaoh through Moses. It was great God's grace. God did not let them perish in the hard labor in the Egyptian Empire but delivered them by Shepherd Moses. It was to let them experience that an ungodly nation and ungodly people are merciless and ruthless and are perishing people. But people under God's care are happy and become God's hope and mission. God trained the people of Israel for forty years in the desert after delivering them from the Egyptian Empire. God let them stay in the wilderness for forty years in order to teach a simple lesson. That is daily bread eating every day. God gave them one day's portion of daily bread every day. But some greedy people went out on Sunday and raked a lot of daily bread and put it in their refrigerator. The next morning it all became rotten. In order to help them listen to God's voice and to depend on God daily, God trained his people for forty years. But the people who were formerly captives did not listen. As a result, all the first generation died in the desert except Caleb and Joshua. Only the second generation could go into the promised land and enjoy flowing milk and honey.

In the promised land, they kept God's law for the time being. But soon they were contaminated by the Canaanite culture and abundant flowing milk and honey received at no charge. Wow! They were amazed. They thought they could live without God, forgetting God's grace and why he sent them to the land flowing with milk and honey. God sent them to this land, not to enjoy material abundance, but to proclaim the law of God to all peoples of all nations through the roads of the promised land. Finally, they were all corrupted. Their king's ten sons were killed by the Babylonian invaders. King Zedekiah's eyes were plucked out and he was dragged into a Babylonian palace (2Ki 25:7). The problem of not having the sense of history-not remembering that God wanted to make a kingdom of priests and a holy nation among his chosen people-brought a terrible result.

In Israel's history we find a man after God's own heart. He was King David. His love of God and praising God through his dancing and Psalm writing and through his practical life was the most eminent. But he committed one sin before God. When he sinned, he lost all his joy and all his happiness and felt a thornbush was growing in his soul. So he came to God and begged forgiveness and his sins were forgiven. But the seed of sin remained. So gospel writers wrote about him, that he served God's will in his own generation. But he did not serve Solomon's generation (Ac 13:36). We see how Solomon was a nice king in the sight of God. But later he became arrogant and lecherous. Thus, Israel was divided into two countries: Northern Israel and Judah, as Korea has been divided into South Korea and North Korea.

Why did God choose the people of Israel as his chosen people? Why did God persevere with his people, killing so many of his prophets and holy servants? It was to make Israel a kingdom of priests and a holy nation and thus spread the law of God to all peoples of all nations. But the people of Israel always complained about their poor situations. Still, Jewish people complain about their poor situations even though they have raked most of the money in this century. In short, his chosen people became lovers of money by abandoning God. They could not fulfill God's hope by being a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. When we see God's hope for his chosen people Israel, it is really tearful for God's unending effort and faithfulness to draw them to him to raise them as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. But it was impossible. Finally, Christianity occupied the Roman Empire. They compromised between state and church. They were utterly corrupted. They did not follow God's will, but sent a Christian army to restore the sacred land Jerusalem, and for thirty years killed so many young people and damaged the opponent people too. This was not God's hope for his chosen people to become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. God's hope is to proclaim God's law to all peoples of all nations. But the chosen people forgot God's hope and their identity as a chosen people, as his disciples forgot about the five loaves and seven loaves events.

Here we learn we must have a sense of history. Certainly God saved us through one event. And God poured his grace on us through his Son Jesus Christ's precious blood. But we forget and live like vulgar people. We must live for God's hope of establishing a kingdom of priests and a holy nation in America. But we live a habitual existence. May God give us a sense of history. When we study history, Arnold Joseph Toynbee seems to be the best historian. His definition of history is challenge and

response and new result. He could not escape from the theory of vicious cycle in history like other historians. But he immensely emphasized that moral and religious challenges contribute to the human civilization. It is nothing but a theory. Only when we have God's hope to make America a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, will the world be bright and God's grace shower on each of the people of the whole world.