

Home Study

Mark's Epiphany



MONDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2021

INTRODUCTION

When you were a child, did your parents ever have to tell you the same thing over and over? Fill in the blank: "How many times do I have to tell you to _____!"

If you're a parent yourself, you can probably relate to this frustration.

Imagine how God must feel. When we sin repeatedly, when we make the same mistakes multiple times, when we fall back in to unhealthy behavior patterns ...

Thank God for his patience with us!

TODAY'S READING

Mark shares a quick story with us, in which Jesus actually loses patience with certain people. He doesn't lash out at them, though, or smite them with his heavenly power. But his frustration shows through, and it's understandable.

Open your Bible, and read Mark 8:11-13. As you're reading, pay attention to what the Pharisees ask of Jesus, and pay attention to his reply. Which surprises you the most?

Today's reading takes place immediately after the Lord's second miraculous feeding of the crowds (Mark 8:1-10). This was yet another in a long series of miracles that Jesus performed publicly. Mark has taken great pains to demonstrate the power and authority of Christ so far, hasn't he?

If someone had been an eyewitness to every single one of Jesus' miracles, do you think there could have possibly been any doubt in that person's mind that Jesus was truly God?

The Pharisees may not have seen all of Christ's miracles, but they had seen and heard plenty. Why do you think that the Pharisees were so consistently opposed to Jesus? Why did they refuse to believe that he was genuine?

The Pharisees, for a long time, were regarded by the common people as being the most knowledgeable and most pious of all God's people. Now, the people were

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clamoring around Jesus of Nazareth. Were they jealous of Jesus? Was he cutting into their business? Was Jesus damaging their brand somehow?

How would you describe the spiritual condition of the Pharisees? Deep down in their hearts, do you suppose there was anything but opposition to Jesus?

Read verse 11 again. How do you think the Pharisees might have responded if Jesus had granted their request, and shown them yet another miracle? Do you think there was any real chance that they might have suddenly turned to Jesus?

Remember, these men had already made up their minds to do away with Jesus. Read Mark 3:6 again. How do their words in today's reading smack of hypocrisy? On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate their sincerity? Their hypocrisy?

Not to put you in the same camp as the Pharisees, but have you ever demanded a sign from God? Prayed for something specific to happen? Tried to bargain with God? In general, the Bible strongly discourages believers from these approaches. "Trust and obey" is always better than "Give me a sign!"

Read verse 12 again. When Mark tells us that Jesus "sighed deeply in his spirit," he wants us to know that Jesus was experiencing deep emotion. What do you suppose he was feeling about the Pharisees' hypocrisy? Any compassion? Any anger? Any other emotions?

We need to understand Jesus' words about the Pharisees, and "this generation," in the light of Matthew 12:38-41. Read those verses, then read Mark 8:12 again.

Clearly, Jesus had lost his patience. He might have wished for his enemies to change their view of him, but he wasn't forcing them to become believers. Humans, in the end, have a kind of "veto power" over God's mercy. When such power is used – as the Pharisees were using it – it must be deeply disturbing to God.

The ultimate sign given to the Pharisees, to all of Jesus' enemies, and to all humanity, would be the death and resurrection of Jesus. Not everyone gets it, or accepts it. Jesus is not regarded as Lord by all, as we all know.

Our mission, as Christians, is to share the Good News of Christ. We can't make people believe. But we can show and tell, plant seeds, share our faith, put Christian love into action, help others see, broadcast the story, and bring Christ to others in our generations. May God help our church to carry on the work of Christ in our day and age – and to God be the glory!

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PRAYER

Jesus, my/our only Savior, keep my/our eyes focused on your cross and empty tomb. Keep the mission of Hope Lutheran Church clear and concentrated, and help us never to lose heart when it comes to carrying on your work. May the story of your death and resurrection be my/our greatest joy and treasure, today and forever! Amen.