

Copyright © Two Journeys Ministry

Andrew M. Davis

Sermon Notes

www.twojourneys.org

Please use in accordance with the copyright policy found at twojourneys.org

Forgetting God's Wonders

Mark 8:11-21

This morning, we have a layered story of forgetfulness... of different groups forgetting the mighty wonders of Christ

Each of them will be instructive for us!

I. Two Different Cases of Forgetfulness

A. The Disciples' Forgetfulness

Mark 8:14 The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat.

1. Now... to some degree this was a big deal
2. After all, Jesus and his disciples were continually moving around from place to place, often in deserted places where there was no provision
3. It was indeed someone's job to remember to bring provisions for their day's needs
4. We'll talk more about this forgetfulness later

B. The Sinful Forgetfulness of the Pharisees

Mark 8:11-13 The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven. 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." ¹³ Then he left them, got back into the boat and crossed to the other side.

1. This was the constant demand for NEW signs... not the desire for any sign at all
2. It was as if any signs Jesus had done up to that moment meant nothing
3. Jesus' enemies dismissed all the prior evidence of his wonder-working power and stood there demanding a NEW sign from heaven
4. This is corroborated in detail in John 6, the DAY AFTER the feeding of the 5000

John 6:28-31 Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" ²⁹ Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." ³⁰ So they asked him, "What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? ³¹ Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

5. Stunning. The very next day, they want another sign
6. Actually it seems they wanted a continual river of signs, like Moses did... miracles every day
7. They sinfully forgot the works of Christ every single day as if they were instantly forgettable

II. The Indispensable Role of Christ's Miracles

A. The Miracles Are the Fundamental Proof of the Deity of Christ

A Royal official whose son lay dying asked Jesus to come and heal him:

John 4:48 "Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe."

In John 5, Jesus gave the layers of testimony (proof) that he was sent from God: first, John the Baptist; second... the miracles:

John 5:36 "I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me."

To his own disciples, he openly says the miracles are a valid basis of their faith:

John 14:11 Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves."

B. The Miracles Are the Valid Basis of Saving Faith

1. Without the miracles, we would have no reason to believe in Jesus
2. The primary miracle is Jesus' own resurrection from the dead

Romans 10:9 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

Doubting Thomas represents us all:

John 20:24-29 Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it." ²⁶ A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." ²⁸ Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹ Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

ON WHAT BASIS do we "not see and yet believe" that Jesus is Lord and God and that he rose from the dead? On the basis of scripture's testimony to his life and miracles.

C. Our Access to All These Miracles is THE BIBLE and Nowhere Else!

John 20:30-31 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹ But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name

D. So... Jesus' Miracles Are Essential to Our Faith and Our Salvation

E. Similarly... God's Miracles for Israel Were Essential to their Faith and Their Confidence in God

BUT...

III. Israel's Tragic History of Forgetfulness

A. These Pharisees Stand in the Place of their Wicked Ancestors

1. Again and again, the Jewish people refused to believe in God's mighty works in the past and then would veer into rebellion

B. During the Exodus Itself: At the Red Sea

1. After the Ten Plagues, the greatest display of God's miraculous power ever, Israel sees Pharaoh and his army pursuing them, drawing near to slaughter them
2. They cry out in faithless forgetfulness of all God's awesome displays of wonder-working power... specifically the power to judge Pharaoh and his Egyptian nation

Exodus 14:10-12 They said to Moses, "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? ¹² Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!"

3. HOW COULD THEY FORGET SO SOON???

4. God dealt strongly with Moses and Israel:

Exodus 14:15-17 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on. ¹⁶ Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the

Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground. ¹⁷ I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them.

With the new miracle, the most spectacular of them all, God had proved his power again. And Israel celebrated and worshiped... but their habit of forgetting God was just getting going

C. In the Desert ... for Food, then for Water at Massah and Meribah

1. No food... they cried out against God and Moses as if nothing had ever happened up to that point

Exodus 16:3-4 The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the LORD's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death." ⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you.

2. No water... at Massah and Meribah

Exodus 17:3 the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?"

Exodus 17:5-7 The LORD answered Moses, "Walk on ahead of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. ⁶ I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink." So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷ And he called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the LORD saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"

D. On the Brink of the Promised Land: The Ten Spies

1. About to enter the Promised Land, they send twelve spies
2. When they came back, ten of them spoke terrible words of unbelief against God and turned the hearts of the people away from God despite all that God had done for them up to that point

3. Moses pleaded with them... and God judged them

Deuteronomy 1:29-35 *Then I said to you, "Do not be terrified; do not be afraid of them. ³⁰ The LORD your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes, ³¹ and in the desert. There you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place." ³² In spite of this, you did not trust in the LORD your God, ³³ who went ahead of you on your journey, in fire by night and in a cloud by day, to search out places for you to camp and to show you the way you should go. ³⁴ When the LORD heard what you said, he was angry and solemnly swore: ³⁵ "Not a man of this evil generation shall see the good land I swore to give your forefathers*

E. A Generation After the Conquest of the Promised Land

Judges 2:10-11 *After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel. ¹¹ Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD and served the Baals.*

F. Psalm 78's Summary and Exhortation

Psalm 78:3-7 *what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us. ⁴ We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done. ⁵ He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, ⁶ so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. ⁷ Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands.*

Psalm 78:9-14 *The men of Ephraim, though armed with bows, turned back on the day of battle; ¹⁰ they did not keep God's covenant and refused to live by his law. ¹¹ They forgot what he had done, the wonders he had shown them. ¹² He did miracles in the sight of their fathers in the land of Egypt, in the region of Zoan. ¹³ He divided the sea and led them through; he made the water stand firm*

like a wall. ¹⁴ He guided them with the cloud by day and with light from the fire all night.

Then the psalmist recounts a lot of the same history I just did... God's miracles for Israel and their wicked pattern of forgetting those miracles and sinning against God:

Psalm 78:32-33 In spite of all this, they kept on sinning; in spite of his wonders, they did not believe. ³³ So he ended their days in futility and their years in terror.

The rest of the Psalm continues to recount the same tragic pattern... God's amazing power unleashed for Israel, and their sinful forgetting of that power soon afterward and lurching into more sinful rebellion.

So... these Pharisees stand in the place of their fathers with the same hardened heart of unbelief, forgetting the miracles Jesus has already done, even the very day before that... and demanding a new sign from heaven

IV. Jesus Judges the Unbelievers' Forgetfulness

Mark 8:11 The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven.

A. Notice their motive: to TEST him

1. This was exactly the sinful motive of Israel in the desert at Massah and Meribah... testing God to see if he was real

Exodus 17:7 And he called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the LORD saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"

2. So it is with these Pharisees... putting Jesus to the test
3. They have pretty much already made up their minds about him... that he was doing his miracles by the power of Satan

B. Jesus Sighs, Refuses, and Rebukes Them Sharply

Mark 8:12-13 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." ¹³ Then he left them, got back into the boat and crossed to the other side.

1. The sigh here is radically different than the sigh he used to heal the deaf man
2. Here it is a sigh of exasperation at their unbelief; it is an expression of deep sorrow over them
3. He takes no pleasure in the death of his enemies; their wicked testing hearts will lead them to hell
4. So he refuses them any sign at all
5. BUT actually, he says more than this in Matthew

Matthew 12:38-41 Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, "Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you." ³⁹ He answered, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. ⁴⁰ For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. ⁴¹ The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here.

6. The sign of Jonah is his own resurrection... and the preaching that the apostles would do would be similar to the preaching Jonah did in Nineveh, calling on the people to repent of their sins
7. BUT the great tragedy is this... even this, the greatest sign from heaven in history, will not be enough to convert them

So much for the enemies.

Now let's talk about Jesus' disciples... and their forgetfulness of the miracles:

V. Jesus Heals the Believers' Forgetfulness

Mark 8:14-21 The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat. ¹⁵ "Be careful," Jesus warned them. "Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod." ¹⁶ They discussed this with one another and said, "It is because we have no bread." ¹⁷ 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? ¹⁸ Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember? ¹⁹ When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" "Twelve," they replied. ²⁰ "And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" They answered, "Seven." ²¹ He said to them, "Do you still not understand?"

A. The Smaller Issue: The Disciples' Forgot to Bring Bread

1. As I said, it's a big deal to some degree...
2. If the disciples who were responsible to bring the bread are negligent, they won't eat that day!
3. They end up discussing it... probably arguing about it; blaming each other for forgetting the bread

B. The Topic: Jesus' Ongoing Spiritual Instructions

1. Jesus warned the disciples about the "yeast" of the Pharisees and Herod
2. In case we didn't know what this analogy meant, Matthew spells it out directly, though there he mentions the Sadducees and does not mention Herod

Matthew 16:12 Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

3. So, the "yeast" is the bad teaching of all three groups... the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and Herod
4. It is likened to yeast because of its ability to spread its bad effect

5. Paul also speaks of “yeast” in 1 Corinthians 5 about the need for church discipline: “a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough”... the sinful influence will spread throughout the whole church if you don’t remove it
6. What specifically was Jesus warning about?
 - a. We don’t know here: but in other places, the consistent charge against the Pharisees was their legalism and their hypocrisy, as well as their worldliness
 - b. The Sadducees were in error about the resurrection as well as the existence of angels and demons... and they had other false doctrines as well
 - c. Herod... his sin was his adulterous marriage to his brother’s wife as well as his generally worldly and wicked lifestyle, not to mention his murdering of John the Baptist

C. The Disciples Couldn’t Understand This

1. They were preoccupied with literal bread
2. They were worrying, like the pagans who say “What shall we eat? What shall we drink? What shall we wear?”
3. They should have been seeking first the Kingdom of God and not worrying about their stomachs
4. So Jesus has to address their hardened hearts... AGAIN!
5. Remember earlier, in the account about Jesus walking on the water, Mark had told us this:

Mark 6:51-52 They were completely amazed, ⁵² for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.

6. Their hardened hearts were exposed by their astonishment at Jesus’ powers... they still didn’t “GET IT” about who Jesus really was
7. Now, again, Jesus has to address the hardness of their hearts; in their case, it’s not that they didn’t believe that Jesus did those two

miraculous feedings... but they didn't extend their faith to the next level and draw proper conclusions

8. What conclusions? That Jesus can care for their bodily needs with the greatest of ease, and therefore their focus should be entirely on "Seeking first his Kingdom and his righteousness..." Laboring for spiritual bread, not physical... focusing on what really matters

D. Listen Again to Jesus' Rebuke:

Mark 8:17-21 Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? ¹⁸ Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember? ¹⁹ When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" "Twelve," they replied. ²⁰ "And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" They answered, "Seven." ²¹ He said to them, "Do you still not understand?"

Key insight:

1. Faith comes from EXPERIENCE as well as from SCRIPTURE
 - a. Jesus is walking them through the two feeding miracles... through the details and the mechanics
 - b. "Don't you remember? You men were there! You touched the bread and fish yourselves! You saw it with your own eyes! You picked up the broken pieces with your own hands!"
 - c. That experience should have taught you to trust me to FEED you for the rest of your lives!
 - d. They should PONDER the SIGNIFICANCE of the amazing experience
2. So also with us: FAITH GROWS BY LIVING IN GOD! Seeing God's past faithfulness in our lives should cause us to trust God's faithfulness in new situations!
3. Look at how Paul learned the secret of Christian contentment:

Philippians 4:11-13 I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹² I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Paul lived through this and lived through that... and learned by experience how to be content with God's provision

4. So also maturity comes by suffering

2 Corinthians 1:8-10 We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. ⁹ Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. ¹⁰ He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us

Paul went through that overwhelming suffering and learned from it... the God who raises the dead will deliver us from all our troubles!

VI. Lessons

A. What About OUR Forgetfulness?

1. How are we living out a faithless forgetfulness of God's amazing works in the past?
2. How do our anxieties and fears and reactions to situations mirror faithless Israel in the desert or the faithless Pharisees testing Jesus for a sign?
3. How does our murmuring and complaining against God when we are in trials show that our hearts are hard and we haven't learned from God's faithfulness in the past?

B. Be Transformed by the Renewing of Your Mind

1. Go back over scripture regularly, daily, to remind yourself of the mighty deeds of God
2. Study the miracles he has done for Israel
3. Study even more the miracles Jesus did... the healings, the feedings, the stilling of the storm, the walking on water... and especially his mighty resurrection victory!
4. Ask the Lord to show you your own hardness of heart in which you are being slow to believe Christ now

C. Teach the Mighty Works of God to Your Children!

1. Psalm 78: a strong exhortation to Christian parents

Psalm 78:3-8 what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us. ⁴ We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done. ⁵ He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, ⁶ so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. ⁷ Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands. ⁸ They would not be like their forefathers-- a stubborn and rebellious generation, whose hearts were not loyal to God, whose spirits were not faithful to him.

2. Look at the lessons we Christian parents should teach to our children
 - a. The “praiseworthy deeds of the Lord... his power... the wonders he has done”
 - b. Start with creation... the astonishing universe God created by the word of his power
 - c. Then teach them the history of God’s working with Israel; the wonders he did for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and of course, the incredible wonders of the Ten Plagues and the Red Sea crossing; and the manna and the water from the rock

- d. Keep going throughout Israel's history... all the amazing deliverances God worked and the prophecies he spoke
 - e. But especially saturate your kids in the miracles of Jesus—the river of healings he did, show them how great is God and his Son, Jesus Christ
3. The reason Psalm 78 gives for this parent-child instruction: So that they will PUT THEIR TRUST IN GOD and WOULD NOT FORGET HIS DEEDS... and show their faith by their OBEDIENCE to HIS COMMANDS
 4. Warn them not to be like the rebellious sinners in Israel whose hearts were not loyal to God
 5. Lead your kids to salvation in Christ!!
 6. Teach them to lead a life of REMEMBERING Christ's mighty works!

D. Lost Friends: Come to Christ!!

1. These miracle accounts are written to save your soul!
2. See in yourself the need for a Savior...
3. As we saw a few weeks ago... the list of corruptions that flow from within our hearts:

Mark 7:21-23 For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²² greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. ²³ All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.'"

4. Realize that Jesus came to die for all those sins... and by his resurrection, he proves his identity as the Savior of the world
5. Call on the name of the Lord for your forgiveness and your salvation!