

## Mark 8: 14-21

14 Now the disciples had forgotten to bring any bread; and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. <sup>15</sup>And he cautioned them, saying, 'Watch out—beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod.' <sup>16</sup>They said to one another, 'It is because we have no bread.' <sup>17</sup>And becoming aware of it, Jesus said to them, 'Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? <sup>18</sup>Do you have eyes, and fail to see? Do you have ears, and fail to hear? And do you not remember? <sup>19</sup>When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?' They said to him, 'Twelve.' <sup>20</sup>And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?' And they said to him, 'Seven.' <sup>21</sup>Then he said to them, 'Do you not yet understand?'

**Commentary:** It is truly disappointing to encounter repeatedly the failure of the disciples to be in spiritual communion with Jesus. They just don't get it. They are still preoccupied with external worries and necessities, failing to be nourished by Jesus in spirit. They cannot trust him completely and let go their incessant need to be in charge of their destinies and let go their need for control. They cannot find peace in the faith that they will be cared for in a way they could never fathom or secure for themselves. The 'yeast' of the Pharisees and Herod is precisely about this stubborn, instinctive focus on externals: rites and rules (Pharisees); secular power, control, security and money (Herod). Even though the disciples are far from either the Pharisees or Herod in terms of their lifestyle and means, they are persistent in aligning their hopes and dreams in the same false gods. Jesus will not fulfill his messiahship to fit their false expectations.

Are your hopes and dreams in life far too attached to externals to be closely aligned to God's will and way for your life? Whose dreams are you fulfilling for your life: God's or the false gods of this world?

And such questions are surely apropos for us in this season of Covid-19, as well as in our continuing grief over the mass shooting in Nova Scotia. We are extra sensitive to that which we cannot control and which so affects our daily lives in negative ways. We are feeling that much more insecure and uncertain, and our need for security, control and certainty can block us from seeing this time as also an opportunity and invitation to evaluate more deeply what needs to shift or change in our lives going forward. What should not come back for us as it was in our lives, as we imagine a 'new normal' going forward? What should we discard, let go and unload from our being once and for all? And if we are living a little lighter as a result of discarding old baggage, what may we have space for in our lives to commit to, learn and take on more fully?

**Prayer:** Cut through our expectations, O God, in this time of insecurity and loss of control. May we learn to trust the journey and open our hearts to newness in what may be for us going forward. May we rise up to your expectations that there is a special way you want to bless the world through each one of us... so long as we unload the baggage of security and control that weighs us down and blocks our capacity to see and soar; Amen.