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Go and make disciples!

E-votional 90

Do you not yet perceive?

Matthew 16:5-12

When the disciples reached the other side, they had forgotten to bring any bread. Jesus said to them, "Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." And they began discussing it among themselves, saying, "We brought no bread." But Jesus, aware of this, said, "O you of little faith, why are you discussing among yourselves the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive? Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? How is it that you fail to understand that I did not speak about bread? Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." Then they understood that he did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

There is something worth taking note of in this passage of Scripture that I think we should really open up to. I know there are many other lessons in this same passage, however, I would just like to highlight this one for the purpose of practical application.

To begin let us understand the discourse in the previous verses, namely 1-4 and how Jesus just got done commenting on the Pharisees and Sadducees inability to interpret the times and seasons even though they could determine the weather by the appearance of the sky. To this, in verse 3, Jesus said this, "*You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.*"

I wanted to point this out because of the similarity with how Jesus spoke to His disciples in our chosen passage of Scripture. Really, the only difference between the discourse with the Pharisees and Sadducees and that of the disciples was that one had to do with the signs of the times and the other had to do with perceiving what Jesus was actually saying rather than what the disciples were hearing. What do I mean then?

Well, the disciples were realizing that they had forgotten bread to take with them on their journey. When they arrived at their destination Jesus said, *“Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”* To this the disciples began talking amongst themselves saying, *“We brought no bread.”* Jesus aware of this said, *“O you of little faith, why are you discussing among yourselves the fact that you have no bread?”* I know right, Jesus how did you not know they were talking about bread? No, of course, that would not be the right line of questioning, but how many fall into that trap. In fact, Jesus responds further by saying, *“Do you not yet perceive?”*

Okay, so here the disciples are thinking that Jesus is talking about bread because they were just thinking about how they did not bring bread for the journey. The meaning Jesus was trying to articulate was really two-fold.

First, Jesus’ response of, *“o you of little faith,”* could be tied to the fact that even when they did not have bread in the past somehow, they always had what they needed. To go even deeper, Jesus already taught them the importance of not seeking bread or clothing but to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness because then and only then would all those things that they needed be added to them. He was calling their faith little because these are things they should already know and be settled in. That is, in God’s provision.

Lastly, Jesus in saying, *“Do you not yet perceive,”* is showing them their inability to discern spiritual matters. In fact, the similarity here as with the Pharisees and Sadducees was that of only looking to natural matters rather than the true spiritual matters. The disciples were thinking about their failure to bring bread for the journey when Jesus told them to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. To this, the disciples thought Jesus was talking about bread. But Jesus was actually denoting leaven to the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Of course, the disciples understood this at the end of this conversation. But the question lies in the point that they did not understand it when it was first being spoken to them.

This brings me to the most important and practical part of this teaching. Are we looking to the natural things or the spiritual?

If we are constantly looking at the natural things and trying to interpret them through natural methods and practices, we will always fall short of the true meaning. Also, if we somehow dissect the natural form the spiritual, we will still fall short of the true meaning. What shall we do then?

Jesus often spoke in parables and used natural means to convey spiritual messages. Accordingly, we should pray for hearts and ears of true spiritual

discernment so we can accurately hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

I was taught early on in my Christian journey to not accept natural occurrence at face value but to ask the Lord those tough probing questions about what I am seeing and experiencing. One modern-day example is this covid pandemic we all find ourselves in. Brothers and sisters, there are a right and a wrong way to interpret what is going on here. Being able to discern the times and seasons spiritually is an extremely important application to the Christian faith. Now, in saying that, it doesn't mean we will have all the answers. In fact, the closer we are in relationship to God the more we should have a trust in Him that is not determined by what we understand but positioned on who we understand. Basically, we must know the Lord and His heart, but that does not always mean we will know why He does everything He does. However, at the same time we can understand to some degree of what season we are in.

The covid pandemic is seen by some as an attack from the devil or just a natural occurrence. And yet others see it as a judgment from God. I believe it was a judgment from God, for the devil is not that powerful so as to strike the whole earth with a plague. Repeatedly in Scripture, we see plagues and destruction fall upon a people who forsakes God and His ways. Furthermore, the spiritual connection lies in the fact that these massive covid shutdowns where everyone was forced into the homes took place on Passover week. During the original Passover in Egypt, the Lord told the people to go into their homes and shut their doors and place the blood of a lamb on their doorposts. It is no coincidence that this took place when it did. This is just one of many examples.

The practical takeaway here is that we must never judge by appearances but judge with true discernment from God. It may be that the Lord is trying to show us something and for that, we will need to be ready to hear what He has to say. God is speaking today and we need to focus not on the natural but on the spiritual.

If you are one who is prone only to look at the natural reasoning for things that happen in your life take heart and adjust your viewpoint with that of the Lord's. Ask Him those tough probing questions and say something like this.

Lord, I don't fully understand why these things are taking place but my hope is in You alone. Accordingly, give me eyes to see and ears to hear what Your Spirit is saying. Show me why You have allowed this and lead me in Your ways and in Your truth. Give me a pure heart so that I may see You alone and what You are doing, in Jesus name. Amen

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In Christ's Love,
Chris and Jeanne
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