

- 1) Last time, we were discussing hard-heartedness on the part of the disciples.
- 2) As we concluded we posed the question

How do we display hard heartedness?

- 3) Before we address that, let's do a quick review of the scripture that brought us to the question.

Mark 8:14-21 (NIV)

- 4) I know Jesus is not weak like us but I can truly almost hear the frustration in His voice as He asks these questions to remind these men of miracles, they themselves had participated in.
- 5) I think it is important to note that Jesus is not telling these men these things – He is asking them – He wants them to bring the events to mind.
- 6) Along with hearing the frustration in Jesus' voice, I think I can hear the timidity in disciples voice as they answer His questions – correctly but, realizing His displeasure with them.
- 7) Another point here I think is important to note – He asks the question “do you not understand” twice.
- 8) I'm sure that He was hoping for an answer or a discussion that would show that they did – however, none is given here.

The first question we need to answer is – How are the disciples displaying hard heartedness?

- Wrong thinking – they hear what Jesus says and see (even participate in) what he can do but do not grasp the significance in their hearts.
 - They don't connect what they see and know about Jesus to the big picture.
 - Could we not say – if we boil this down to the basics – they (their hearts) are not changed by him or his teachings?
- 9) The LABC makes this comment about what they call the HARDHEARTS CLUB.

Today the hard hearts believe

- (1) that poverty is caused by laziness; helping poor people only reinforces their failures;
- (2) that youth are vicious and spoiled and should be taught from early age to respect their elders (be seen and not heard) as their first duty;
- (3) that worship is best conducted in one way — our way — which has worked very well for forty years, thank you, and need not be changed;
- (4) that evangelism doesn't apply; people will never change anyway, so we don't need to do it.

Many churches have chapters of this distinguished club. The stronger the club, the more money is saved from frivolous expense (like a youth program), and

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the more time is saved from silliness like innovative programming and special ministries to needy populations.

Now, back to the question – How do we display hard heartedness? Is the HARDHEARTS CLUB the only way or are there other less drastic ways?

10) LABC concludes their comment this way:

Joining the hard heart Club requires only one pledge: You must refuse to listen to Jesus' questions. Don't be a hard heart. Be open to Christ's truth. Let him change your heart.

11) Mark gives us no further information about this exchange between Jesus and the disciples.

a) I personally assume that there was more discussion as they continued to Bethsaida.

- 1) Despite His frustration with them He still loved them and wanted them to be strong and become the founders of the church that He knew they were going to be.
- 2) To me, what we will see next, the miracle healing of the blind man, and the following incident of Peter's confession are all linked together as an example of growing faith.

Mark 8:22-26 (NIV)

- 3) Jesus and the disciples have now arrived back in Bethsaida.
- 4) Mark tells us that some people (family, or friends) brought a blind man to Jesus.
- 5) Most likely, it was family since blind folks were considered outcasts of society in those times.
- 6) Here, we see another time when Jesus chooses to heal away from the crowds.
- 7) He takes the man by the hand and leads him outside the village we assume that they are accompanied by the ones who brought the man and the disciples.
- 8) Once they are in the place Jesus chooses, he heals the man.
- 9) Now, this healing is unique in that it takes place in two stages.
- 10) At the first laying on of Jesus' hands, the man can see but not completely
- 11) At the second, he is completely healed and "sees everything clearly"
- 12) This is NOT a failure of Jesus' power!
- 13) Instead, it is a lesson for the disciples – spiritual blindness can be overcome with faith but not instantly.
- 14) As the blind man began to see, so we (and the disciples) must grow.
 - a) Just like the blind man, at first he sees things but they are not clear (not understood) "people look like trees walking around".
 - b) But as Jesus completed the healing he saw clearly – as will the disciples.
- 15) We begin with faith but that faith must mature which takes time.

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- 16) This two stage cure of the blind man was a lesson of encouragement to the disciples.
- 17) Beyond this, this private miracle underscored a number of important truths for them.
- 18) **First**, it served as a confirmation of Jesus' deity, since only divine power could open the eyes of the blind
- 19) **Second**, it marked a turning point in Jesus' ministry.
- a) The Lord's public ministry in Galilee was over, and His focus was on training His disciples.
 - b) From this point forward, with the cross only months away, Jesus began to speak plainly to the Twelve about His coming death (cf. Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:32).
- 20) **Finally**, this miracle served as an illustration for the disciples of temporary spiritual blindness.

Let's discuss for a moment our spiritual blindness –

Are there days when we feel like the disciples – we just don't get it?

Are there days when you feel like the blind man after the second touch?

How do we cure our spiritual blindness?

Opinion Question (no right / wrong answers)

– Is faith like a muscle that requires exercise to increase and not decrease?