



ENCOUNTER

Unmoved
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Discussion Notes
The Crossing Church
Las Vegas, Nevada

OPENING

This week, we are continuing our series called *Encounter*. We are walking through the life of Jesus using the Gospel of Mark as the backdrop. Instead of just doing something new in 2017, let us become something new – let us become more like Jesus. Mark’s agenda in writing his gospel is to establish Jesus’ identity as the King with authority over all things, including the Sabbath, and His purpose of dying on the Cross. So, we’re on a journey that has the potential to change our lives. We are getting up close and personal with the life of Christ. Remember, the closer we get to Him, the more our lives will change.

SCRIPTURE¹

Mark 6:35-38 By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. “This is a remote place,” they said, “and it is already very late. Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.” But he said, “You give them something to eat.” They said to him, “That would take more than half a year’s wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?” “How many loaves do you have?” he asked. “Go and see.” When they found out, they said, “Five loaves and two fish.”

Mark 6:39-44 Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. The number of men who had eaten was five thousand.

Mark 6:47-52 Later that night, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land. He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. Shortly before dawn he went out to them walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them, but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out, because they saw him and were terrified. Immediately he spoke to them and said, “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.” Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed, for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.

Ezekiel 36:26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

Question: Tell us the names of all the Old Testament people you can recall who had hardened hearts. What did they have in common?

OBSERVATION

The disciples experienced Jesus up close and personal for three years and often missed the wonder of what He was doing. The parable of the loaves and fishes tells of people who were hungry and disciples who were tied and didn’t know what to do for them. Then they experienced an enormous miracle as five thousand men were fed, not to mention all of the women and children. But the effort of picking up the

¹ All scripture is NIV unless otherwise noted.

leftovers placed such a strain on the disciples that they were color blind and didn't appreciate the full impact of what had just happened. When Jesus came to them later, walking on the water, they were amazed even though this miracle was no greater than the previous one they had witnessed! They didn't realize that what they saw, and how they saw it, made all the difference.

Question: Think of a time when you were in close proximity to a miracle, but were color blind to what God was doing. When did you realize its true nature?

APPLICATION

We are about to learn that what we see and how we see it, make all the difference. This is a message not about our physical hearts, but our other hearts – the invisible part of us that philosophers, poets and preachers talk about. These hearts are the mysterious, wonderful, confusing parts of us that enable fear, laughter, wonder, passions and experiences of life. But over time, we experience things that slowly erode our hearts' sensitivity. The causes of hardening hearts can be unplanned situations, unmet expectations, and uninspired efforts. Signs of a hard heart include indifference to God and to people; things that used to be meaningful have become mechanical; you assume the worst in people and not the best.

Question: When was the last time you considered the condition of your heart? Was it soft or had a hardness begun to invade it? How did you react the last time a panhandler approached you on a street corner or in a parking lot? How did you feel?

Our eyes and hearts are closely tied together. If our eyes are the portals to our hearts, then what we see impacts our hearts and how we see it. Sometimes we see from a frustrated perspective or a selfish perspective, or we simply don't see at all. It is possible that we, through our perspectives, have set such parameters on God, such expectations on our relationship with Him, such limits as to how God will intervene in our lives, and such barriers as to how we will respond to Him, that our hearts have grown hard.

Question: How has your spiritual life changed over the past five years? Is your heart softer or harder? What has caused the change?

Question: What are you experiencing today that could be hardening your heart?

Did you know that a heart has a mind of its own? Just ask a heart transplant recipient! Many of them talk about new desires that accompany their new hearts - hearts with new cellular memories. The prophet Ezekiel said that God would replace our hardened hearts with hearts of flesh – hearts with whole new sensory responses, cravings and habits.

One of the greatest mistakes we Christians make is approaching God deductively as an object of knowledge instead of inductively as the cause of all our wonder. He is more than factual – He is wonderful. The mind is educated with facts, but the heart is educated with beauty, mind and soul. If loving God with all our heart means a heart that breaks for the things that break the heart of God, then loving God with all our soul means we live a life full of wonder and mystery.

Question: Tell us about the last time your heart swelled up in awe at the magnificence of God's natural world? Where were you? What did you see in a spiritual sense?

Question: What are you passionate about today?

Question: Does your heart still break for the things that break God's heart? Give us a recent example. Remember, when we see with clearer eyes, we live with softer hearts.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, sometimes we lose touch with the conditions of our hearts. We see miracles in every day life, but don't perceive them with our hearts. Help us to be more aware of Your miracles around us and to pray that we become more involved in what matters to You. Please don't let us miss what You are doing. In Jesus' name. Amen.