

Today we will look briefly at Mark's Gospel. Jesus and His disciples made a brief stop on the western side of the lake (Dalmanutha – 8:10). However, they leave almost as quickly as they landed because of the skepticism of the Pharisees. They are heading to Bethsaida (8:22), which is on the northern tip of the lake.

During the trip, Jesus continues teaching His disciples. They are to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. In the Scripture, leaven can be a good thing. For example, Jesus says the kingdom of heaven is like yeast that is mixed with three measures of wheat flour (Matt. 13:33). Today, however, leaven symbolizes something negative.

Scholars debate its meaning. Does leaven symbolize hardness of heart, unbelief, corruption, or hypocrisy? In the end, it's probably good that it remains unclear because we should beware of all bad influences.

Additionally, we again are confronted with the disciples and their struggle to understand. Their minds are with their bellies. They are worried they don't have enough bread. Here, we empathize with Jesus because He has done much and there appears to be little fruit to show for it. Lest we be too harsh, though, imagine if you tape-recorded all your thoughts during the last Mass you attended. Have you always focused? Has your mind been concerned about your needs?

After recounting the previous two miracles, Jesus asks, "*Do you still not understand?*" We sense there is a feeling of disappointment in these words. If Jesus can feed so many with so little, He can certainly feed His flock of disciples with one loaf.

Today's gospel gives a few points to reflect upon. First, even though the disciples struggle, Jesus doesn't give up on them. He will to continue to work with them. They still have a future. God willing, their ears will be opened like the deaf man or the eyes of a blind man. If He was willing to work with the pillars of His Church, He will certainly work with us as well!

Second, if the pillars of the Church struggled, we will as well. We are all in the same boat. In prayer, we should ask that our ears and eyes be opened.

Finally, may we always remember that as we travel together, Jesus, the one loaf, is always in the boat with us. We never travel alone. Instead, Christ is with us and will always provide for our needs. Our task is to trust Him!