

(In preparation for gathered worship next Sunday, November 30, 2008)

Mark 7:31 – 8:26

In our passage this week, we see a remarkable example of the way the apostle Mark, under inspiration of God, arranges his material in order to make a point.

Note how the two miracles of Jesus – 7:31-37 and 8:22-26 – form perfect bookends of the verses in between, how they provide the solution to the main problem of the passage – namely, the inability of people to see and hear with understanding (8:17-18).

Read carefully, pray earnestly and work through the following questions:

1. Once again, Jesus feeds the throngs with scant pickings (8:1-10). What lesson are we to derive from this miracle? See verse 8.
2. Remarkably (after a miracle so dramatic), the Pharisees ask Jesus for a sign (verse 11). Do you ever ask Jesus for a sign? Explain. Why does Jesus refuse the Pharisees' request?
3. What is 'the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod'? (verse 15) Does that leaven ever infiltrate your life? Give examples.
4. What do the disciples 'not yet perceive or understand'? See verses 17-21. Is it an understanding that escapes you too? How can you obtain this understanding? Do the miracles at the two ends of the passage – 7:31-37 and 8:22-26 – help to answer the last question? In other words, what role does Jesus play in providing understanding? Explain.