

MARK 8:14-21

WHERE ARE YOU LOOKING?

¹⁴ The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat. ¹⁵ "Be careful," Jesus warned them. "Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod." ¹⁶ They discussed this with one another and said, "It is because we have no bread." ¹⁷ Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: "Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? ¹⁸ Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember? ¹⁹ When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" "Twelve," they replied. ²⁰ "And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" They answered, "Seven." ²¹ He said to them, "Do you still not understand?"

When the disciples were with Jesus in the boat and they were discussing Jesus' comment about the yeast of the Pharisees, where was their focus?

- A. On Jesus
- B. On the Pharisees
- C. On what had just happened on shore
- D. On themselves
- E. None of the above

Jesus' response to them eliminates answers A through C, leaving us with fact that they were either thinking about themselves or not thinking at all. As attractive as that last alternative is, the correct answer is D – On themselves.

How many times have you owned the blame for something that really wasn't yours? We all have the tendency to react to someone not calling us back, reciprocating an invitation or including us in their plans, by trying to figure out what we did wrong. In most cases, the only thing we ultimately did do wrong was to put the focus on ourselves, by taking "credit" where it wasn't due.

The disciples cannot see or understand Jesus' words because they are too busy worrying about what they did wrong – they *had forgotten to bring bread*. With their focus being on themselves they were not even able to consider what Jesus was trying to teach them about the danger of falling into the trap of the Pharisees' need for incontrovertible proof. Jesus had to reorient the disciples by reminding them that he is fully capable of providing the bread they need.

When you pray, where is your focus? Do you think that your focus might have something to do with why you do not often "hear" Jesus when you pray?

Holy Spirit, turn the eyes of my heart to Jesus. Keep me from falling into the trap of praying as if the world revolves around me. Likewise, prevent me from even considering that my mistakes and weaknesses might be able to thwart the will of my Sovereign Lord. Help me to recognize and repent of my sins, and then focus on Jesus and his forgiveness, so that I might live in obedience to him. Amen.