

Matthew 16:1-12 | Ted Tash

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Preacher: Ted Tash

[0 : 00] Good morning. Lydia, I left my water bottle there. Could you toss that to me? Joseph mentioned the fall. When you live in the Midwest, it's hard to tell if it's fall or not. I would agree. I think summer's probably my favorite, especially now with having kids that just love to swim.

Summer is great in the Midwest. There's good things about winter as well. I do like a good snowfall, but fall is probably my favorite. In living in the Midwest, I would say the fall is probably my favorite day of the entire year.

Now, one other terrible joke and then we'll get going. On the 25th of October, it is a special day. There's probably one person that goes to Bethel that could tell you off the top of the head what October 25th is, and it's Kevin Killeen, and he's not in here, so I can't call on him.

But October 25th is St. Crispin's Day. Does anybody know what St. Crispin's Day is? Nobody does. Okay. I also don't know what St. Crispin's Day is, but I know there's a famous speech given on the eve of St. Crispin's Day, and it's the speech that Henry V gave before they went and fought the Battle of Agincourt, and it's the very famous speech where he says, We few, we happy, happy few, we band of brothers, and he goes on to give the big speech.

And with the whole Stiles family out of town and Gulf Shores, I kind of feel like that applies to us today. We few, we happy few. So, anyway, turn with me to Matthew 16, and we've got the first 12 verses here today out of the book of Matthew 16, and it really splits right down the middle.

[1 : 49] As far as kind of parts to the message, we have the first part here where Jesus is rebuking the Pharisees a little bit. And then we have the second part, kind of verses 5 to 12, where Jesus is rebuking his disciples a little bit.

So we have two cases where Jesus is rebuking those that he's interacting with. In one case, the Pharisees and Sadducees, and then the other case, his disciples. But hopefully we can pull a little bit out to apply to us today.

So before we read, let's go ahead and pray. Father God, just thank you for the day, and thank you that even though the sun are out of town, we can still gather together and read your word and learn from it.

And we do just pray that as we dive in here, we'd have open hearts and minds just to learn what you would have from your word for us. And we pray all this in Jesus' name. So yeah, let's just dive right in.

We're going to read 1 through 4 here. So Matthew 16, verse 1, it says, Hypocrites!

[3 : 17] This is a little bit of a tense exchange, a little bit of an awkward exchange there.

The Pharisees and Sadducees come, and they test Jesus, and they ask for a sign from heaven. And Jesus refuses to give it. And it's actually a pretty interesting observation here that he refuses to give it for many reasons, but I think ultimately he knows their heart.

He knows that the heart of the Pharisees and Sadducees is not right. And so Jesus does not, if you will, bark on command for them. That's what several of the commentators said, that Jesus won't just bark on command.

He won't just pull down a sign from heaven. Although he's totally capable to do it, he's not going to do it for them, because he knows that their heart is not right.

If you write here in just the adjacent passage in 15, at the start of the chapter, the Pharisees come to Jesus, and they test him about his disciples.

[4 : 37] And they say, you know, your disciples don't wash their hands before they eat. They don't do the ceremonial cleansing before they eat bread. What's up with that? And Jesus nails them there, and he says, well, it's not what goes into the man that defiles them.

It's what comes out of the man, what proceeds from the heart that defiles the man. And he says in verse 7 of chapter 15, you hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying, these people draw near to me with their mouth, and they honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. And so Jesus knows that nothing good is going to come from him doing a sign, or calling down a sign from heaven just to appease the Pharisees and Sadducees. Because, again, their heart is far from him.

And it reminds me, earlier in Matthew chapter 11, if you actually want to go ahead and turn there, we're going to stay in Matthew 11 for a little bit. But in Matthew 11, he's, again, kind of rebuking the Pharisees and Sadducees.

And in verse 16, he says, To what shall I liken this generation? It's like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to their companions, saying, We played the flute for you, and you did not dance.

[5 : 58] We mourned to you, and you did not lament. So Jesus is saying, it's a lose-lose. I'm darned if I do, I'm darned if I don't. If I come and I play the flute, you're not going to dance. If I come and I mourn, you're not going to weep, or you're not going to lament.

So, which is it? It doesn't matter which it is, I'm going to lose here. Whether I call down a sign from heaven, or whether I don't. And he goes on to say in the next verse, John came, and he's talking about John the Baptist, came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, look, he has a demon. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, look, a glutton and a wine-bibber. And so he's saying, it doesn't matter which path I go here, if I call down a sign or I don't, nothing's going to change.

Because your hearts are hardened. They were stiff-necked people. And I actually love it, in the next chapter, Jesus casts out a demon right in front of him. And they say, yeah, he casts out a demon by the ruler of demons.

Right? They say, the only reason he can do that is because he's possessed by the devil. So again, darned if you do, darned if you don't. So Jesus does not give them a sign here.

[7 : 03] The next part here, that Jesus kind of nails them on, he says it's not that you're not capable of reading signs.

You're totally capable of reading signs. He says when the sky's red at night, you say, hey, it's going to be bad weather. And when the sky's red during the day, it's going to be good weather. Okay. Thought he was coming for me.

I had the high ground here. I felt good, though. I don't know if any of you ever heard this saying, for whatever reason, my parents said this, like, I feel like a lot growing up.

Like, it's one of the, like, things that's ingrained in me. But red sky at night, sailor's delight. Red sky at morning, sailor take warning. Is there, okay. All of the previous generation was shaking their head yes.

So maybe that was a them thing. Anyway. Anyway. But Jesus is saying, look, you guys can read signs. Like, you're not void of understanding.

[8 : 11] Like, you can see the sky and determine what the weather's going to be. Like, you're perfectly capable of critical thought. But you can't read the signs of the times. And this is where I'd just love to point out that nowhere was Jesus, like, doing these things in secret.

You know, it wasn't like he was hiding away and doing miracles. Now, there are a few places where it says Jesus didn't do any other signs or wonders there. But he was out in the open doing these things.

And, again, if you're still in Matthew 11, if you look at, like, verse 2 and 3, John the Baptist is in prison. And he sends a couple of his disciples to Jesus to ask if he's the Messiah.

So John, or, sorry, Matthew 11, verse 2, it says, When John had heard in prison about the works of Christ. Let's pause there for a second.

John had what? He had heard. From where? In prison. About what? The works of Christ. So I would imagine, back in the day, news didn't spread all that well.

[9 : 16] And I would imagine, especially, it didn't spread very well to those who were in prison. And yet you've got the Pharisees and Sadducees who are in the synagogue, which is, like, the center of the Jewish culture, you know, where any rumor or any news or any gossip would have gotten around, for sure, to the Pharisees and Sadducees.

But yet John the Baptist in prison is hearing about what Jesus is doing. Certainly the Pharisees and Sadducees did. But he sent two of his disciples, and they said to him, Jesus, Are you the coming one, or do we look for another?

And Jesus could just give them a firm yes. Like, yes, I am the one. I am the Messiah. Like, it's time for the kingdom. But he doesn't.

He kind of leaves it, he doesn't leave it open-ended. But how he responds is, Go tell John the things which you hear and see. And to me, that is a definitive answer.

And we'll see why in a second. But what that says is that the signs were so obvious that Jesus was the one. And the signs were so prevalent and out there that there was no doubt that he was the one.

[10:34] And so the Pharisees, when they asked for a sign, there were signs everywhere.

Because I don't think that this answer is an ambiguous answer at all. Jesus says, Go tell John the things which you hear and you see. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

What other signs do you want? Right? Like, are you the coming one? Yeah, go tell John what you see. Like, it's obvious. The blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk.

And what's wild is here in this passage, chapter 16, we're literally nine verses prior, the passage that Jeffrey had last week, of Jesus healing these great multitudes.

Like in 15, verse 30, it says, Great multitudes came to him, having with them the lame, blind, mute, maimed, and many others, and they laid them down at Jesus' feet, and he healed them. So the multitude marveled when they saw, what did they see?

The mute speaking, the maimed made whole, the lame walking, the blind seeing, and they glorified the God of Israel. And then nine verses later, Hey Jesus, can we see a sign? Like, here's the signs.

[11:45] And so he says, you hypocrites, you can discern the face of the weather, but you can't discern the sign of the times.

And then Jesus hits him with this. He says, A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

And he left them and departed. Now that's kind of an interesting thought, like the sign of Jonah. What is the sign of Jonah?

Well, it's interesting. Back in Matthew 12, the Pharisees had asked for a sign earlier. In Matthew 12, verse 38, it's exactly the same story as what we have.

Some of the scribes and Pharisees came and said to him, Teacher, we want to see a sign from you. And in verse 39, Jesus gives them the exact same response. He says, An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

[12:55] And so again, that kind of raises the question like, well, what is the sign of the prophet Jonah? I'll throw that out to the room. Anybody have a guess on the sign of the prophet Jonah?

Because I'll tell you, I didn't have a good guess until I got into this a little bit. Okay. Resurrection, I heard. There you go. Yeah, the very next verse.

It's exactly, it's the resurrection. It says this, For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

So Jesus is saying, the resurrection, which they probably didn't understand quite yet, that's going to be the sign.

If you want a sign, this is the sign I'm going to give you. Jonah was in the fish for three days and three nights. The Son of Man is going to be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Kind of a quick aside just on the resurrection.

[13:59] You know, obviously I've always known the resurrection is important and Paul says like without the resurrection we would be hopeless. But man, it's really been clicking for me lately just how important the resurrection was.

You know, if you go all the way back to the garden, like Paul says in Romans 5, like sin entered the world through the disobedience of one man. But what came through sin?

Death. Death came through sin and thus death spread to all men. Why? Because all have sinned. Like that is kind of one of the key things is that sin and death is a universal thing.

And the power of sin is death and the resurrection shows God's power and Jesus' power over sin and over death. And so the resurrection is just such a crucial, important thing.

And Jesus says this is going to be the sign. The resurrection, that's going to be the sign that you guys are going to have. And then verse 41 of chapter 12 is really interesting.

[15:02] It says the men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.

You know, I don't know that I put this together before but the preaching that Jonah did was pretty lame.

And in fact, Jeffrey, when he spoke on it, he said it was like the worst gospel message of all time. And it was literally, he said, 40 days and Nineveh will be overthrown. That was the whole message. That was all he shared.

He said, yet 40 days and Nineveh will be overthrown. And yet the whole town repents. Right? Like the men repent, the women and children repent, the king repents.

It says that even the animals, look that up, the animals were wearing sackcloth and ashes. Like, I don't know the physics of how that all works. But that's what it says.

[15:57] And the message was, yet 40 days and Nineveh will be overthrown. Like, it's not that great of a message. You know, like, and so to me, I think that implies that the men of Nineveh understood in some way, shape, or form the idea of the resurrection that Jonah was three days and three nights in this fish and here he shows up to our town alive and well.

And somehow through that they understood the goodness of God because the message wasn't great. So they had to have, they had to have deduced that from him being in the fish for three days and three nights. Just the goodness of God and God's capability of saving.

That's my own take. But I really think that's what Jesus is getting at here. And he said, those men who understood that, Jonah being in a fish and getting spat up, they will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah.

And indeed, a greater than Jonah is here. So Jesus says, I'll give you a sign and it's going to be the resurrection. Turn real quick, if you will, to the book of Acts, chapter 2.

You know, Jesus gets arrested and crucified and at the end of the Gospels he, you know, he's resurrected. And then you get to Acts chapter 1 and he ascends into heaven and then Acts chapter 2.

[17:36] You have Peter go on to really give like a full like exposition of of the Lord Jesus and really kind of vindicate his whole ministry. It's great.

But we'll just read a couple verses from it. Verse 22, talking about the resurrection being the sign to that generation. He says, Men of Israel, hear these words.

Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested by God. That's attested by God. The word means like proved by God or to demonstrate or to like declare by example.

So a man attested by God to you. How? By miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through him where in your midst.

As you yourselves know, the signs were everywhere. Him being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified and put to death.

[18:39] And then here's the ultimate sign. Whom God raised up having loosed the pains of death because it was not possible that he should be held by it. So Peter goes right into the men of Israel and says, Look, here's the sign.

God raised him up from the dead and really, if you go through the whole rest of this passage, it's all about the resurrection. He says like, You won't leave my soul in Hades. You won't let your Holy One see corruption. He says, We know where David's tomb is.

We can go visit that. But Jesus is raised up. He won't let his flesh see corruption. You go on and on and on. The whole passage is about the resurrection.

And we know that some of these men that Peter's talking to here do repent. The Pharisees and Sadducees obviously didn't. But there will come a time in the future where the men of Nineveh will rise up in judgment against those Pharisees and Sadducees.

Because even though the signs were everywhere, they chose not to believe them, including the sign of the resurrection. They still went on in unbelief. All right.

[19:51] So let's get to kind of the second half here. The back nine of the passage. And this is where Jesus is going to rebuke his disciples for their lack of belief.

So we're going to start in verse 5 and we'll go through 12 here. It says this, When his disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.

And Jesus said to them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

And they reasoned amongst themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread.

And Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, Oh, you of little faith, why do you reason amongst yourselves because you have brought no bread? Do you not yet understand or remember the five loaves of the 5,000 and how many baskets you took up or the seven loaves of the 4,000 and how many large baskets you took up?

How is it that you do not understand that I do not speak to you concerning bread, but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, Then they understood that he did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

[21 : 11] It's kind of an interesting passage there. He's warning them, obviously, to beware of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees. And again, that doctrine would be like a doctrine of self-righteousness.

They would clean the outside of the glass. Jesus says they would strain the gnat and swallow the camel. They were whitewashed tombs, right? They look good on the outside, but inside full of dead man's bones.

And he's saying beware of that self-righteousness where they draw near me with their mouth, but their heart is far from me. Beware of that sin.

Beware of that leaven. Because it's not what goes into the man that defiles him, but what comes out. And he says beware of that. And I think that the disciples, you know, verse 12, it says that they understood that message, but they didn't understand it at first.

And this is where I want to look at it for just a second, and I think we'll get some good application out of it. Verse 5, it says that the disciples had forgotten.

[22 : 16] They had forgotten to take bread. And in verse 9, Jesus says, do not yet understand, do not remember the five loaves and the 5,000 or the seven loaves of the 4,000?

How is it that you do not understand I don't speak to you concerning bread? I think what Jesus is saying there at the end is, don't you understand, I got bread under control. Like, we fed 5,000 people out of five loaves.

And literally, Jeffrey really didn't get to it last week, but the feeding of the 4,000 was just a page over. Like, that's verses 32 to the end of chapter 15. He says, they had seven loaves and a few fish and he broke them and fed 4,000 people.

I've always kind of thought it was funny, you know, the five loaves feed 5,000, so it's kind of like a thousand to one ratio. And then I've always liked that it was seven loaves for 4,000. Just like, to me, the point is, math doesn't have to work.

Like, Jesus can just do whatever he wants with bread. Like, I don't speak to you concerning bread. It's not about the bread. Like, I've got bread under control. I've got everything under control, is what he's saying.

[23 : 34] Like, the seven loaves for 4,000, that doesn't even equal a whole number. You know, if it was like 4,200, like, okay, it's like 6 to 1, something like that. So I love that it doesn't add up.

Like, Jesus has it under control. It says, don't you understand, I'm not talking about bread. I've got bread under control.

And so, I love this. If you kind of pick and choose the words a little bit here, it says, when they came to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. But the point is, they had forgotten.

The disciples had forgotten. And Jesus says, oh, you of little faith, don't you understand or remember? The disciples have forgotten. Jesus says, don't you remember?

Here, yeah, they're talking about bread. And Jesus says, yeah, I've got bread under control. But I would ask you, like, what have you forgotten? You know, the Lord says, don't you remember? Humans are forgetful people, especially when it comes to the relationship with God.

[24 : 40] You know, when the Israelites crossed the Jordan River, God told them to bring some stones with them, right? One for each of the tribes. And the point of that was, so you don't remember that I got you across, or so you don't forget that I got you across this river.

Like, I provided for you that day. Like, bring these stones as memorials to me taking care of you. You know, you get into, when he has the manna from heaven, they took some of that and I think they put it in the ark.

Somebody might want to correct me on that, but I think that's where some of the manna ended up. And the point was, remember when you didn't have any food and I rained manna down from heaven for you to provide? Like, you're going to forget unless you keep this memorial for me. The Lord's Supper, he takes bread and he takes wine and says, hey, when you eat the bread and you take the wine, do this in remembrance of me. Like, why? So we don't forget. forget? Because we are by nature forgetful people.

And so that's my question. What is it that you've forgotten? You know, it says, they forgot, oh you of little faith, don't you remember? Man, that hits me for sure. You know, I do tend to worry about things.

[25 : 47] I have gotten better with that as I've gotten a little bit older. But it is very natural for me to wake up in a new house and, you know, look at the, look at the world that we are living in and worry about the economy some and think, you know, is my job safe?

You hear layoffs all over or are the AI robots going to take our job? You know, am I going to be able to afford this big house? And you worry and it's like, man, you can look back on my life or I can look back on my life and think like, God has been with me every single step of the way.

You know, like he's taken care of all of it my entire lifetime. And even if, through my eyes, he were to stop taking care of me, like, I know I'm still saved, right?

Like, you go back to Jeffrey, I thought Jeffrey's message last week was one of the best messages I've heard in a long time where it doesn't matter if you get healed or not, like, God can heal you, he might not heal you, it doesn't matter about your faith, it's up to God, but the most important thing is the gospel, right?

Like, all the people that Jesus healed died. Like, all the people that Jesus raised from the dead, like, Lazarus died twice. the important thing is the gospel. So it's like, man, do you forget that?

[26 : 59] Or do you remember that? That's the important thing. And what I would say is, like, when you remember what the Lord has done for you, it does two things. One, it gives you a spirit of, like, thanksgiving.

Like, man, God, instead of worrying about, like, oh, am I going to be able to afford this house? Like, God, thank you for this house, this is awesome, like, this is where we wanted to live and, like, we are able to afford it and, like, you've put all the things into place where we can do this and it's great. Like, thank you, God. Like, thank you for saving me with remembering the Lord through the Lord's Supper. So one, it makes you thankful. Two, it eases all your worry. Like, oh yeah, all those other things I was worried about, you took care of.

Like, all those other times we didn't have any food, yeah, Lord, you fed 5,000 people so much that we have baskets left over. And so it makes you thankful and it eases your worries.

I was telling my neighbor the other day, which is Tom, this, I've been wanting to say that for a while.

[28 : 05] That went over well, too. So, this week, Lily, my oldest, turned 7. It was her birthday on Monday. And I will never forget speaking about worrying all the time.

A really good lesson for me. When she was born, it was November, sorry, October of 2017. And so Trump had just been in office for like nine months. Like, he, you know, came in January of 17.

And I guarantee no one in this room other than Tom now knows what we were all worried about in October of 2017. But everybody was worried about it. And it was, is that we were going to go to nuclear war with North Korea.

Remember Trump said, called him Rocket Boy or whatever. Little Rocket Boy, yeah. He is good with names. I'll give him that. He's got some good names.

But we were all worried. Like, the world's going to end. Sky is falling. We're going to nuclear war with North Korea. We're going to, everybody's going to die. And here I'm holding like this brand new child. I'm like, what am I doing bringing a child into this world? That is about to be destroyed by nuclear warfare.

[29 : 09] And like, did that happen? No. Like, if I didn't just bring it up now, we would have all forgotten. We had all forgotten that we were worried about that ever at any point. And so, man, I go back to what Jesus says in like Matthew 6.

Like, look at the birds, man. Like, they don't sow. They don't reap. They don't store up in barns. And God feeds them. He takes care of them. He says, look at the flowers. They don't sow like with a thread.

They don't make clothes for themselves, and yet God clothes them, and he makes beautiful clothes for them. He says, even Solomon, with all the money that he had, wasn't clothed as good as the flowers of the field are clothed.

So he says, seek me first, and I will take care of all these other things. Don't worry about tomorrow. Today's got enough trouble of its own. Yeah. They had forgotten.

Oh, you of little faith, don't you remember? And so I would just, I would encourage you this week, just remember what the Lord has done for you. And be thankful for it, and let that ease your worry, because 99% of the things you worry about will never come to pass.

[30 : 15] And you're just, you're robbing your future self, or your present self. There's a, there's a saying there. It's all right. So yeah, remember the Lord this week.

If the musicians want to come up, I just wanted to share one, one other thing talking about remembering, maybe give you a little practical, practical, practical way to remember.

I want to read this out of the ESV, that's why I'm hopping to the phone here. In Hebrews 13, this, this came up, I don't know, a month or so ago, and I've been trying to think of a way to bring it up, and I think this is kind of a good, good way to do it.

So in Hebrews 13, there's a call to remember and it's, it comes from verse seven. And this verse has just been, been great.

But it says this, remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. I think we could probably all say in our life, we have at least someone who has kind of fulfilled that role for us.

[31 : 22] A leader who maybe took you under their wing, who spoke to you the word of God. So when you're looking for things to remember this week, maybe remember a person like that. And then here's the second half of the verse.

Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. That's been a powerful verse to me. I thought that was a good way to wrap it up.

So let's pray here. Father God, thank you for loving us. Thank you for giving us so many examples, Lord, both in your word and also just in the experience of our lives, of ways you've taken care of us and ways that you love us and care for us and provide for us, Lord.

I pray that we wouldn't forget. It's our natural tendency, Lord, to forget and to worry about the next thing. And Lord, I pray that we would slow down and just remember the ways you've taken care of us.

Lord, the signs are all there and we're thankful for it. And Lord, we're thankful most of all for your death and your burial and your resurrection which gives us salvation and I pray that we would remember that this week as well.

[32 : 22] We pray all this in Jesus' name.