

# Seeking Heaven or Seduced by Leaven?

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[ 0 : 00 ] So we're going to turn now to our Bible reading this morning, which you will find in Matthew's Gospel and at chapter 15.

We're picking up at Matthew 15 verse 21, following the passage we read last week where Jesus is scathing in his condemnation of, well, the religious leaders, the established church, those who felt themselves very pious and very religious people.

But verse 21 is a devastating indictment of Jesus' view of them. Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon, a place outside the boundary of Judea where pagan foreigners, Gentiles, Canaanites lived.

And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, have mercy on me, O Lord, son of David. My daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.

But he didn't answer her word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, send her away, for she's crying out after us. And he answered her, I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

[ 1 : 29 ] But she came and knelt before him, saying, Lord, help me. And he answered, it's not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs. She said, yes, Lord.

Yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table. And then Jesus answered her, O woman, great is your faith. Be it done for you as you desire.

And her daughter was healed instantly. Jesus went on from there and walked beside the Sea of Galilee. Also remember the place of Gentiles, Galilee of the Gentiles, as it's called in chapter 4, verse 15.

And he went up on the mountain there and sat down. And great crowds came to him, bringing with him the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others. And they put them at his feet.

And he healed them. So that the crowd wondered when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled healthy, the lame walking, the blind seeing. And they glorified the God of Israel.

[ 2 : 39 ] Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, I have compassion on the crowd because they've been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. And I'm unwilling to send them away hungry lest they faint on the way.

The disciples said to him, Where are we to get enough bread in such a desolate place to feed so great a crowd? Jesus said to them, How many loaves do you have?

And they said, Seven and a few small fish. They raked in the crowds to sit down on the ground. He took the seven loaves and the fish. And having given thanks, he broke them, gave them to the disciples.

And the disciples gave them to the crowds. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up seven baskets full of the broken pieces left over. Those who ate were 4,000 men besides women and children.

And after sending away the crowds, he got into the boat and went to the region of Magadan. And the Pharisees and the Sadducees came.

[ 3 : 45 ] And to test him, they asked him to show a sign from heaven. He answered them, When it's evening, you say it'll be fair weather for the sky's red.

And in the morning, it'll be stormy today for the sky's red and threatening. You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.

An evil, an adulterous generation seeks for a sign. But no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. So he left them and departed.

When the disciples reached the other side, they'd forgotten to bring any bread. Jesus said to them, Watch out, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

They began discussing it among themselves, saying, We brought no bread. But Jesus, aware of this, said, Oh, you of little faith, why are you discussing among yourselves the fact you have no bread?

[ 4 : 48 ] Do you not yet perceive? Do you not remember the five loaves for the 5,000, and how many baskets you gathered? Or the seven loaves for the 4,000, and how many baskets you gathered?

How is it that you fail to understand that I didn't speak about bread? Beware the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Then they understood that he didn't tell them to beware, that he did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

Amen. May God bless to us his word. Well, do open your Bibles in Matthew chapter 15.

Matthew's Gospel, this book that we're reading, is a book about nothing less than the transformation of the universe. And that is happening by the breaking into this world of the kingdom of heaven itself in the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

And when that happens, a cataclysmic division is forced, a parting of the ways. It did that then when Jesus confronted the world in person, and it does the same now when he confronts this world in his word of the gospel.

[ 6 : 16 ] And it forces a parting of the ways between those who refuse to see and accept the unique demand and call of Jesus Christ, and those who will see and understand and therefore submit to the lordship of Jesus, who are drawn to him, gathered around him, and being formed into a new community, the community of the kingdom of heaven.

And this community is described by Jesus and by the New Testament writers in terms of family. It's a new family. It's a new household that God is gathering for himself.

That's what the Church of Jesus Christ is. Now, our weekly notice sheets, when we used to have them, had printed on them words from 1 Timothy chapter 3, verse 15, where Paul is teaching the Christian church God's family values, if you like.

And he says to them, I'm doing that so that you may know how to behave in the household of God, the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of truth.

God's household, his church, his family in Christ. And these middle chapters of Matthew's gospel that we're looking at, they're about understanding Jesus and his household.

[ 7 : 43 ] And in chapters 14 to 18 here, we see him gathering this whole extended family around him. And that's Jesus' mission. Verse 18 of chapter 16 really sums it up.

I will build my church, my household, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, he says. And the great challenge that these chapters present to us all is this, to walk with Jesus as he gathers his family around him, not to walk away.

And we saw that last time, the way that Jesus exposes our hearts. And that many who do seem outwardly to be God's people, inwardly, in fact, are actually far away from him.

And that's a real warning to everyone because now that the eternal kingdom of heaven has invaded this world, nothing else matters except that you bow the knee to Jesus Christ and you submit to him and that you swear allegiance to him.

That's what faith means. And that alone is what defines membership of his family, his household, his church.

[ 9 : 01 ] Look back to chapter 12, verse 50. Key verse. It's not natural ties of any kind that make you belong, really, to Jesus' household.

Of course, there's great privileges for those whose natural family ties see them born and raised up within the Christian church. Great privileges and therefore, of course, great responsibilities, great expectations.

But look what Jesus says makes you truly part of his family. It's doing the will of my Father in heaven, he says. Which means bowing the knee to Jesus Christ in obedient faith.

Notice how clear Jesus is. His gospel is not just about saving individual souls, is it? He is building his church around his son as the chief, as the chief cornerstone, as the head of that church.

Because, you see, the gospel is God's story. It's not our story. It's all about the glory and the triumph of his son, Jesus Christ. But we are offered a place in God's story through his invitation to join in that household of blessing and of joy in his eternal family of faith.

[10:17] And that's why the early church fathers were quite right to insist, as they did, extra ecclesia nulla salus. Outside the church, there is no salvation.

Might sound a little strange, that, to our 21st century ears because we're such individualists. And you even hear people sometimes professing Christians, promoting Jesus, but denigrating and disparaging the church.

And, of course, Protestants are often a bit leery of the Church of Rome's claim to be the only true mother church, the only true home of the faith.

But the Protestant reformers actually were just as strong on this. John Calvin said, for those for whom God is Father, the church may also be mother.

Father, always from her bosom, he said, sorry, apart, away from her bosom, we cannot hope for any forgiveness of sins or any salvation.

[11:18] Our own church's confession of faith, the Westminster Confession of Faith, says this, the visible church is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and the family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.

So that ought to make those think twice, oughtn't it, who think that they can keep at arm's length from really belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ.

People who say, well, there's no need to be tangibly and visibly belonging to the local fellowship of the Church of Jesus Christ. No need to be committed to real membership and partnership.

Not so. Jesus Christ is building His Church. That is the goal of all human history. And nothing is going to stop it.

Because there's nothing more important to Jesus than His Church. Not just His family, but we're also told in the New Testament, aren't we, that the Church is His beloved bride, bought with His own blood.

[12:26] The Church is the goal of all human history. And it is being gathered today in human history, in this world, as the Kingdom of Heaven takes hold in this world.

And that is Matthew's message to us in these chapters. They're showing us how the old order gave way to the new. as Jesus begins gathering His true heavenly family by proclaiming and by manifesting the message of His heavenly kingdom.

The rest of chapter 16, from verse 13 on, focuses on the builder of the household, Jesus Himself, and the foundation of that household, which is the gospel, the apostolic gospel of the cross.

And then in chapter 17, we'll see highlighted where the home of that church family really belongs.

It's in the resurrection kingdom of Heaven. And then it's all leading on to chapter 18, which is the next teaching section in Matthew, where Jesus teaches all about household life, the life of Jesus and His household here and now, how it is that we are to live for Heaven, but still here on Earth.

And we'll come to all of that. But our passage today focuses, first of all, on the vast scope, the worldwide extent of the household of Jesus that He's gathering for Himself.

[13:50] And it's a wonderful, wonderful picture of Christ's kingdom as a house with doors open to the world, welcoming the world, and a table spread for all of His guests, full of satisfying food for everyone who will come to Him and find that satisfaction for their hunger.

Only Jesus Christ is the bread that satisfies. but He has enough bread for the whole wide world and plenty to spare.

And He's calling His whole household to the dinner table, as it were. And you see, the way that you show that you really belong to Jesus' family is that you also have learned to be like Him, to rejoice in the priority of His heavenly food and what it really is and to know who it's really for.

In other words, if the message and the mission of His heavenly kingdom is also your great preoccupation in life, what you want to be involved with more than anything else, if it's the bread of heaven that always fills your heart and your mind, ousting the earthly leaven of self-preoccupation and self-focus so that you live always seeking the eternal heaven and not being seduced by mere earthly leaven.

That's the message Jesus is getting across to us here. And it's that contrast that Matthew shows us here in three scenes. He shows us Jesus' overflowing compassion.

[15:35] But we also see Jesus giving an ominous condemnation and therefore an ongoing challenge to all His church today. So first of all, look at chapter 15, verse 21 to the end of the chapter, which is a wonderful picture of Jesus' overflowing compassion for the hungry.

The door of His kingdom is wide open to the whole wide world, to all who will seek Him in trusting faith. And that's the wonderful message of these verses.

It's so obvious. His invitation is boundless for all who respond to Him. And when they do, there's not just a few crumbs of comfort, there's great basketfuls of His saving grace.

Sufficient for all, even for those who are farthest away, even for the complete outsider and enemy. And there's an abundance to spare.

That's what Jesus was teaching His disciples then and there. And that's what Matthew's preserving and passing on to us today, loud and clear. The key, I think, to the whole section there is verse 21 at the beginning.

[16:50] Jesus withdrew. He took Himself away from the hostility, from the rejection of established religion which was so rotten at its heart.

We saw that, didn't we, last time in verse 19. So graphically, their hearts were full of everything that defiles. Yet they would not come to Jesus for cleansing and forgiveness.

So Jesus withdrew. But where does He go? Well, He goes to Tyre and Sidon, to pagan, Gentile territory, to enemy territory.

It's a bit like an Israeli rabbi today withdrawing and going off to Gaza City. Or just read the prophets in the Old Testament to see how they railed against these cities which were perpetual enemies of Israel.

And notice, by the way, in verse 29, as we indicated, in the reading, the second story is also still in Gentile territory. Galilee of the Gentiles it was called, remember, in chapter 4, verse 15.

[18:01] That's why in verse 31, at the end of that little section, we're told they glorified the God of Israel. So in Jesus' own territory, in the national household of Israel, and among the leaders of these Bible people, He finds only unbelief, only rejection, only blindness.

Remember verse 14, last time, the blind, leading the blind into a pit of disaster. But He is building His church.

And His kingdom will not be frustrated even by that. And so here we are in enemy, pagan, Gentile territory. And that is where Jesus finds faith, in abundance.

And it's where He extends His grace, in superabundance. First, verse 22, with an encounter with an individual, a Canaanite woman, we're told, emphasizing her connection with the historic enemies of Israel, going right back to Moses' time and Joshua's time against the Canaanites.

And yet here, in total contrast with the blindness of Israel and her leaders, here is an amazing sight. This pagan, Gentile, enemy woman.

[19:22] But she's the only person in the whole Gospels to whom Jesus ever says, great is your faith. Remember back in chapter 8, there was a Gentile centurion soldier.

And Jesus said of him that he had faith like no one in Israel. But He says to her, great is your faith. It's extraordinary. But it's not unprecedented.

Think back to the Old Testament, 1 Kings chapter 17. In the time of Elijah, the whole Israelite nation was rejecting God, was turning to Baal, who was the god of Sidon.

Queen Jezebel came from there and seduced the whole nation. Remember what happened? Elijah has to flee from her and he goes to Sidon and is looked after by a widow, a pagan widow woman there in a place called Zarephath, who she is the one who sees the truth of the God of Israel through this prophet.

And so it's happening again here, this pagan woman. Look what she says, verse 22. You are the son of David. That is, you are the Messiah of Israel. It's an amazing encounter.

[20:36] And she's some woman, this lady. She's heard about Jesus. Mark, in Mark chapter 7, tells us that explicitly. And of course, faith comes by hearing. But faith isn't just an intellectual thing, is it?

Faith brings you into a real encounter with Jesus, into a personal trust in him. Faith is throwing everything upon Jesus Christ.

And that's what this woman does. And look what happens, verse 23. Normally, we know, don't we, normally when someone comes to Jesus like that, he receives them with immediate warmth.

But look here, not a single word of encouragement. And then the disciples, they try to encourage him, go on, go on, please give her what she wants, so she'll go away.

This woman's doing her heads in. Look what Jesus says about his household, about his family.

Verse 24, I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

[ 21 : 43 ] Not, look at verse 26, not to Gentile dogs like you. That's what he's saying, it's very offensive. It's a racist comment he's making.

That's how the Jews of Jesus' day talked about the Gentiles, they called them dogs, scum. And he's using their language. But Jesus surely is using it, isn't he, with a twinkle in his eye.

He's deliberately sparring with this tenacious lady. He's testing her. And she shows that she understands the Old Testament faith far better than the proud Jews of Jesus' day.

Yes, she says, verse 27, but even the Gentile dogs, even foreigners like me, do eat the crumbs that fall from the master's table.

Even those outside the privilege of Israel have always been able to find blessing from the spillover of God's grace by clinging to his household of faith.

[ 22 : 52 ] Just like that widow of Zarephath in Sidon in Elijah's time. Just like Rahab the harlot in Joshua's time. Just like Ruth the Moabite. Just like Naaman the Syrian and many, many others who all came to cling to the God of Israel and to find help, to find healing with him.

And this woman knew that. And she recognized that in Jesus he alone was the one to cling to.

He was the one through whom to find the blessing of God to answer her heart's desire. And she sensed, didn't she, that now the only thing that mattered for life was to throw herself on him.

To trust in him alone as the very bread of life for her and for her family. And Jesus said to her, yes, you're right.

And you will have what you seek. Great is your faith. And I think we're meant to see that she saw who Jesus was, that he was Israel's Messiah.

[ 24 : 07 ] And that yes, though his personal ministry was to come first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, she knew that it was going to mean nevertheless glorious salvation, not just for the Jews, but for the whole world, including people like her.

And I think we're meant to see that here because Matthew goes right on to show us Jesus now ministering, not just to a few individual Gentiles, but to huge crowds of these Galileans.

In verse 29, great crowds came to him. Verse 30, do you see with huge expectations bringing with them the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, many others, and he healed them.

And who do they glorify? Verse 31, the God of Israel. The God of Israel. It's a picture of what we read and what we sang in Psalm 47.

Clap your hands, all you people, shout to God with songs of joy, the princes of the peoples, that is the Gentile nations, they gather as the people of the God of Abraham, the God of Israel.

[ 25 : 21 ] And you see, we're being told, yes, this woman understood what God's plan was always about, a spillover of God's grace for the whole world through his people Israel.

And now, that the day of small things, the day of crumbs for the Gentile world is over. Now is the time for great baskets of the bread of heaven to feed the whole world with abundance.

And that's why we have this second feeding miracle here at verse 32. We had the feeding of the 5,000 just a chapter ago, so why on earth would you bother to record another one? Well, this was only 4,000, it doesn't seem to be quite as magnificent.

Why would you bother? Well, it's because these are now Gentile Galileans. And this miracle has a clear message. Jesus is giving a deliberate manifesto of where his mission is going.

Yes, his own personal earthly ministry was mainly concentrated on the Jews, the lost sheep of Israel. But he's already told his followers, hasn't he, that his kingdom will grow to fill the whole earth.

[ 26 : 37 ] Do you remember the parable of the mustard seed? Grows to fill the whole earth. And he's showing his disciples a foretaste of that here. And he's showing them what their mission is going to be.

This is going to be their joy in life. Look at verse 32. I have compassion, he says, on these Gentile crowds. And I won't send them away.

They will be satisfied at the table in my household. He's showing his followers, you see, his compassion for the lost, for outsiders.

I said last time that word compassion is always used of Jesus when he's talking about outsiders, not insiders. He's showing them his compassion for the lost and he's showing his disciples his power to satisfy the deepest needs, the greatest hunger of the human heart.

Look at verse 37. They all ate and were satisfied. They were filled. Then the other time that word is used is in Matthew chapter 5 verse 7. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be filled, satisfied.

[ 27 : 53 ] These people had spiritual needs, they had spiritual hunger that dwarfed their physical hunger. That's why they came to Jesus, that's why they wouldn't leave for days. Three days and they'd run out of food.

Still they wouldn't go, they were hungry for more. But all who come to him for spiritual food will be satisfied.

Come to me and I will give you rest, I'll give you full satisfaction in the presence of God. I'm the bread of life, Jesus says elsewhere.

And the invitation to my table, he says, is to all the nations. This world isn't just going to have crumbs from Jesus.

I've come that it might have satisfaction in abundance. The outsider, the ignorant, all the most unexpected, they're welcome.

[ 28 : 54 ] And it's the insider's job, it's the disciple's job, to break that bread and to offer it and to feed it to the nations. verse 36. Jesus gave the bread to the disciples and they fed the crowd.

Do you see? That's what those of you who are already inside my household are for, Jesus is saying, to carry the bread of heaven, to carry the bread of life to the very ends of the earth. bread. This is all about teaching the disciples about Jesus' bread, about heavenly bread, about the spiritual nourishment that's the only way to life in his kingdom.

Look at verse 36. He gave thanks, he broke it, he gave it, and they ate. once again, just like in chapter 28 at the last supper, he gave thanks, he broke, he gave, and they ate.

Do you remember then he said to them, this is what it means, it's my body and my blood which is given for the forgiveness of sins. This is the offer and the invitation, this is the way into my household, to my family, to my kingdom.

[ 30 : 12 ] And you, my followers, are to take this bread, to take this gospel of the cross to all nations. Not just to make believers notice, remember the great commission, but to make disciples, members of my household, baptized into the church, into my family, my household.

That's the great commission. So friends, I hope you get the picture here. Jesus is building his church, he's gathering his family from all over the world, from every nation, from every people, from every tongue.

And the doors of his household are wide, wide open. And his table is spread with life-giving bread to satisfy every need.

And he has people in this city, in our city, and in this nation, and all over the world who are still outsiders, but for whom he has great compassion.

to feed their wants. And great power. And not one of them who comes to him will ever go away hungry. And he's at work in the most unexpected of places, and he's using ordinary disciples to share that bread of life and to bring others into his household.

[ 31 : 36 ] Jesus is a wonderfully generous host, a welcoming savior with overflowing compassion for the hungry. He won't send the hungry away, not ever, when they seek him in trusting faith.

He who comes to me, says Jesus, I will never, never cast out. And this passage is a vivid picture of that lavish grace, that boundless generosity.

Who could possibly resist and offer such joy, such marvelous salvation and satisfaction? And yet some do.

And chapter 16, verses 1 to 4, you see, is a clashing contrast. And so we have to face up here to Jesus' ominous condemnation for the haughty.

the departure of his kingdom is sadly inevitable from all rejection, for those who scorn him in pride and unbelief. And where people persistently refuse this extraordinary generosity of Jesus, where they won't seek his heavenly nourishment, where they meet his compassion with cynicism, with rejection, temptation, then what Jesus is saying is that the door of his household must ultimately be closed.

[ 33 : 12 ] And it will be closed ultimately to that kind of persistent unbelief. First one you see is clear. Where in verse 30, the Gentile crowds came with such expectation, here these churchmen come just with scorn.

They come to test him. And that's the same phrase used of Satan when he came to Jesus in the wilderness, to test him, to test him, hoping he will fail. Because they hated him.

And like the devil, they would only have Jesus if Jesus would buy down to them. Give us a sign, they said to Jesus, dance to our tune. The absolute opposite, isn't it, of the Canaanite women who

come saying, Lord, help me.

They would never say that. They're far, far too proud to seek his help. Far too proud ever to repent. And so verse 4 here you see is inevitable, but it's very chilling.

Echoes verse 21 that we began with, doesn't it? So he left them and departed. We should note the strange alliance that there is here between these Pharisees and Sadducees.

[ 34 : 30 ] Because in every other respect, these two groups were absolutely bitter enemies. The only one thing that could unite these two groups was their hatred of Jesus Christ.

And that's often the same thing today still, isn't it? It's about the only thing that will unite our secularist, woke culture in the West today and unite it with militant Islam in opposition to Jesus Christ.

Staggering, isn't it? Remember some years ago, perhaps you do too, when there were some American missionaries that were taken hostage by the Taliban in Afghanistan. And I remember listening to a BBC journalist saying, well, it was their own fault for trying to convert these other cultures to the Christian faith.

So you have leftist, post-modern, so-called educated, liberal thinkers united with fundamentalist Islamic death cults.

Only thing in common is a hatred of the gospel and of the mission of Jesus Christ. It doesn't matter how clever, how educated, even how knowledgeable you are about the things of this world, you can be utterly blind to the only thing that really matters in life.

[ 35 : 55 ] That's what Jesus says of these men here in verses 2 and 3. They're great at meteorology. No doubt they're very learned in science and arts and business. PhDs galore, I'm sure, were the equivalent in that day, but utterly blind.

And Jesus says culpably blind about the signs of the times. The glaringly obvious truth of God that was confronting them head on in the word of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

They will not recognize that Jesus is the center, that he is the climax of everything. And they won't kneel before him and do what the pagan woman did, say, Lord, help me, help me.

And whatever the difference is with each other, these Pharisees and the Sadducees, and whatever their differences from us today, underneath it all is always the same fundamental issue.

And that is that they're utterly man centered in their thinking. They are at the center of the universe, not God. They must call the tune in life, not God.

[ 37 : 15 ] God. But you see, what Jesus is saying is you cannot enter God's household that way. And if you won't have Jesus' simple gospel of trusting faith, well, that's not evidence of your enlightenment, your superior education.

Look at verse four. What is Jesus' verdict on that attitude? attitude. It's evil. It's spiritual adultery. It's idolatry.

It's just a refusal to bow down to the one true and living God. And God the Son can't tolerate that. He will have to leave and depart from that attitude. And so his words are an ominous condemnation. condemnation to the haughty, to those who are too proud to kneel, too proud to seek his grace, scorn his door, in unbelief, in pride, in self-belief.

And many, many people still do that today, just as they did then. And it's a stark warning to the world. Perhaps there's some of us here this morning.

[ 38 : 43 ] But there are also, Jesus' words, a stark warning to the professing church. And so we need to look at verses 5 to 12 here, where we have to take to heart Jesus' ongoing challenge to all his household.

The danger to those of his kingdom is ever present in all of our hearts, he says, because we're all so easily seduced by these earthly attitudes.

Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, says Jesus. Three times repeated here to his followers, to his church, to each one of us. That's who he's speaking to.

Because that attitude that fails to see what Jesus and his household is really all about, and must always be concerned with, the heavenly things above all other things, that attitude can creep in like leaven.

And it can infect so easily those who are inside the church of Jesus Christ. You can be inside as you can be caught up with the church's life, and you can still be blind, it seems, to what it really means for all of our priorities in life.

[ 39 : 59 ] And the disciples' dozy answer to Jesus here proves that that danger is so very real, because they didn't have a clue what his warning was even about. All through that boat journey, don't you think, Jesus was no doubt pondering the horror, the pain, the rejection of his ministry by his own people, the awful rejection of his heavenly kingdom that he had witnessed so vividly.

And yet it seems his disciples were completely oblivious to these momentous spiritual things. All they were thinking about was their stomachs. And so he warns them, beware such careless attitudes in your heart.

And yet, verse 7, they just think he's scolding them because they forgot to bring lunch. They miss his warning not to miss his heavenly priorities and not to be caught up in earthly things because they precisely were caught up in earthly trivialities of their thinking about their sandwiches.

And Jesus clearly expected them to understand the spiritual things he was talking to them about. How is it that you fail to understand I'm not talking about bread?

He says in verse 11. Don't you get it? What does it take? It's exactly this kind of thinking he says, this preoccupation with mundane, with just the earthly needs that you have.

[ 41 : 31 ] That's the leaven that's infecting these Pharisees and Sadducees. That's what will ruin you if you don't turn away from it. If you don't see what I'm really about.

If you don't see what you also must be given over to in your thinking about all other earthly things. the great priority of gathering my family from all the earth.

Of feeding the world with my kind of bread, with my kind of feeding. Of satisfying the human heart with the true bread of life which is the bread of heaven. Which is given to the world through me which alone will bring the world satisfaction and bring them true life.

That's what's filling my thoughts. But you seem to be just oblivious to it. All you can think about is your earthly appetites, the next meal.

Food for your bodies. Or cleverness and attainment in your earthly thinking like these churchmen. But be careful says Jesus. Beware that leaven. The evil leaven of earthly preoccupation.

[ 42 : 39 ] Because that will spread so easily in your hearts. And all through even the household of faith. You see, those privileged to being given the word of God as these Pharisees and these Sadducees were.

They won't share the heart of God which is displayed in the mission of Christ and his gospel. They won't share in his invitation of carrying his bread to satisfy the hunger of the crowds outside.

Well then they've totally lost touch, haven't they? With the purpose of God. With the power of God. And so inevitably, they will eventually lose the presence of God.

Jesus left them. He departed. And that's by and large what's happened, isn't it, in our Western world today. Our own nation included.

Privileged beyond measure for centuries. But scorned repeatedly by leaders and people alike until the spirit of Jesus has left and departed in large measure from the Western church.

[ 43 : 52 ] So this challenge is real. It's ongoing. And Jesus speaks these words to his closest disciples. Just as he spoke similar words to the seven churches in Asia Minor in Revelation chapters 1 to 3.

And just as he's speaking to his church right here among us this morning, beware of that leaven that lets the trivialities of self- preoccupation, mere earthly appetites, lose sight of the bread of heaven.

And lose sight of the glorious onward march of the goal of human history, which is the gathering of the family, the household of our Lord from all the earth. Don't lose sight of the wonderful privileged part that we've been given in that to carry the bread of life to all the world.

To carry the message of the broken body and the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, the gospel of the cross, which is the invitation to his household, which is the bread of life that draws in to his family.

And meets the deepest hunger in the human heart. What is the real truth about your heart and my heart, our heart as a church?

[ 45 : 18 ] Are we really always living, seeking heaven? Or are we being seduced by the leaven, which makes us lose that great eternal gospel so easily in earthly absorption, in so many different ways, in all its forms?

That's the ongoing challenge, you see, of Jesus to every one of us here this morning, as a church, as a household of God here at the Tron. To keep our minds, to keep our hearts always on the open

door of his household, on the multitudes still outside, that Jesus will never send away hungry when they seek him in trusting faith.

So friends, we need to determine, don't we, together, to keep the name of Jesus and to keep the extension of the family of Jesus and therefore to keep the ministry of the gospel of Jesus above all other things in our thoughts, in our words, and in our deeds.

Always. Today, tomorrow, every day. Lest we should fall prey to the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

May that never be so. And may God help us. Amen.