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Mark & Friends

Watch Out: The Yeast of Herod and the Pharisees
A verse-by-verse look through the Gospel of Mark with Pastor Jason Epperson •
Monday, July 20, 2026

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Today's focus: Jesus warns His followers to watch out for worldly self-reliance and religious self-righteousness, remember His faithfulness, and depend completely on Him.

Welcome to today's edition of *Mark & Friends*. Listen to the broadcast, read the proofread transcript, download a printable copy, and explore today's Program Resources.

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Opening Welcome

We're glad you're here, we're glad you're here,
Fellowship is sweeter, knowing you're near.
It's so good to see you, we hope that it's clear,
Everyone loves you, we're glad you're here.

Program Summary

Pastor Jason Epperson continues the Gospel of Mark in Mark 8:14-21, where Jesus warns His disciples to watch out for the “yeast” of Herod and the Pharisees. Herod represents the pull of worldly power, prestige, pleasure, and self-protection. The Pharisees represent empty religion, legalism, pride, and outward obedience without dependence on God. Both influences can quietly spread through a life, just as a small amount of yeast works through dough. Jesus calls His followers to remember His faithfulness, recognize Him as the Bread of Life, and trust Him completely.

Key Takeaways

- Remembering what God has already done helps quiet anxiety and strengthens present trust.
- The yeast of Herod is the temptation to pursue power, prestige, pleasure, control, and self-interest apart from God.
- The yeast of the Pharisees is outward religion, comparison, judgment, and rule-keeping without a transformed and dependent heart.
- Both worldly self-reliance and religious self-righteousness keep us from depending fully on Jesus.
- Jesus is the Bread of Life—the One who sustains, provides, restores, and satisfies.
- The central question remains: Who do you say Jesus is?

Scripture References

- Mark 8:14-21 - Jesus warns about the yeast of the Pharisees and Herod.
- Mark 8:1-10 - Jesus feeds the four thousand and provides more than enough.
- Mark 7:31-37 - Jesus heals a man who could not hear or speak clearly.
- Mark 8:22-26 - Jesus restores a blind man’s sight in stages.
- Mark 8:27-30 - Peter confesses that Jesus is the Christ.
- Luke 15:11-32 - The younger and older brothers reveal two different ways of wandering from the father.
- John 6:35 - Jesus identifies Himself as the Bread of Life.
- Matthew 6:19-21 - Store up treasures in heaven rather than on earth.

Quote of the Day

“Do you not get it that I’m the Bread of Life? I’m the One who sustains you. I’m everything you need.”

Broadcast Notes

Jesus’ warning is not merely about obvious unbelief. It is about influences that can enter quietly and grow: worldly ambition on one side and religious pride on the other. The disciples were worried about bread immediately after witnessing miraculous provision. Their problem was not a lack of evidence, but a failure to remember and depend on Jesus. The same warning reaches us: watch what is shaping your heart, remember God’s faithfulness, and keep your eyes fixed on Jesus.

Practical Applications

- Make a written list of specific ways God has provided, guided, forgiven, or carried you through difficult seasons.
- Ask where worldly ambition, image, influence, control, or comfort may be shaping your decisions.
- Notice whether comparison and criticism are making you feel spiritually superior to others.
- Replace anxious self-reliance with specific prayers that ask God to provide what only He can provide.
- Welcome people who feel judged or excluded, remembering that Jesus moved toward the hurting and unclean.
- Confess daily that Jesus—not success, rules, approval, or control—is your true source of life.

Today's Challenge

Today, take ten quiet minutes and answer two questions honestly: Where do I see the yeast of Herod in my life? Where do I see the yeast of the Pharisees? Then write down three ways God

has already shown Himself faithful. Pray over that list and ask Jesus to help you see Him clearly, trust Him fully, and depend on Him today.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank You for warning us because You love us. Show us where worldly desires, self-reliance, religious pride, comparison, or judgment have begun to influence our hearts. Help us remember Your faithfulness and trust You as the Bread of Life. Open our eyes to see You clearly and our ears to hear Your voice. Make us humble, dependent, welcoming, and filled with Your truth and love. You are the Christ, the Son of the living God, and everything we need is found in You. Amen.

Complete Proofread Transcript

That was Mark chapter 8, verse 15. Oh, magnify the Lord with me, let us exalt his name together. It is Monday, July 20, 2026.

Welcome to another edition of Mark and Friends. Today, Pastor Jason Epperson continues our study through the Gospel of Mark with a powerful warning from Jesus. Watch out.

What was Jesus warning his followers about? And how does that same warning apply to us today? Here's Pastor Jason Epperson of CU Church on today, the Monday edition of Mark and Friends. Do you remember in your life what God has done for you? Because if you actually can remember it, it removes a lot of anxiety and worry in your world. What signs in your life matter? Obviously, a stop sign matters.

If you don't stop, you hit someone or someone hits you. I was golfing a year ago. I think it might have been two years ago.

I don't get to golf that much anymore, but I do enjoy when I go. And I have a friend that talks me into going. His name is Pat.

And we're riding in this cart and we're golfing. And "Fore!" on a golf course, when you hear it, you usually put your hand by your head. You duck, you dive, or you get into a cart.

But that term "Fore!" for those of you who don't golf, is a warning that something's coming your way that you don't really want to mess with. It's like a tornado siren. When you're outside and there's a tornado siren, you want to go inside and you want to take shelter, take refuge, take cover.

In elementary school, when they practiced their tornado drills, it was sitting in the hallway with a textbook on your heads. Now they have to use Chromebooks because they don't have... I don't know. I'm just making that up.

I got no idea what they do. But the reality is, when you hear there's certain things in this world, when they say, like, "Fore!" or they say, watch out, you watch out or heads up. It's the same.

I coached a little bit of junior high basketball a couple of years ago. Girls, junior high basketball. And as I was coaching these girls, we were playing against a team.

And this other team was running a 1-2-1-1 full court press. And what that means is they're well coached. What that means is they have a lot of athletes on their team.

And what that also means is there's one place. For those of you who understand basketball, this will make sense. But when you're taking the ball inbounds against a 1-2-2 full court press, you don't want to throw the ball in the corner because that's what they want you to do because they're going to trap you.

And I told the girls, hey, girls, they're going to run this press before the game. I got a whiteboard. They want you to throw the ball here and here.

Don't throw the ball here because if they do, they'll trap you. And we come out. We set up a press break.

And the girls ran to the corners. They caught the ball. They got trapped.

They turned it over. I call timeout. We're down 8-0.

Turn it over. Then we come back. I say, hey, girls, it's OK.

Don't panic. Stop crying. If you catch the ball right here, they're going to trap you.

OK, that's a bad thing. So catch the ball here or here. They come back out and they ran to the corners and they're getting trapped.

And then it's 16-0. And I call another timeout and they come over. I said, hey, girls, where are you not supposed to catch the ball? In the corner.

Then girls, why are we catching the ball in the corner? They actually are letting us catch it there. Really? Really? Shocking. Watch out! Four.

Today, Jesus looks at his disciples. He's going to look at us in the room. And every single one of us today, he's going to tell us not to catch the ball in the corner.

And it will be easier to catch it there. He is yelling, "Fore!" And there's a tornado siren going off. Jesus is looking at his people, his guys, his gals that are following him.

And he says something to them today that honestly, y'all, I don't think I've taught enough about. That's the best way to say it. And I don't think you've been taught it enough.

And so today, let's look at it. It says these words. Now, they had forgotten to bring bread and they had only one loaf with them in the boat.

They just fed 4,000 people. They just had seven basketfuls of leftover bread. They brought a loaf.

I think that's funny. It's like you have a picnic with your family and you buy extra food. And then you go on the road trip and you're 30 minutes into like, man, I'm starving.

It's like, well, what about the left the bucket of fried chicken? Oh, no, I got a leg. Like what? Why didn't you bring the extra? So anyway, that's just shocks me. And so they're concerned about what though? I just need to point out.

Remember last week is it wasn't that they forgot it. They didn't remember it. And so they're in the boat and they're like, we don't have enough food.

You guys, they're asking the exact same question. And it's like, you don't forget what just happened. But do you remember who I am? Do you remember? I am the one that provides your substance.

And then he goes on and says this, and he's, can he caution them? So this is what he says. He's like, I'm done talking about bread. And he says he cautioned them saying he yelled for he actually literally says, watch out.

He says, watch out. Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod. And they began discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread.

So this is what Jesus says. He looks at this group of people. He's in a boat with them.

He says, hey, you need to watch out. Like he says, watch out. Like in the future, when I'm gone, watch out in this moment.

Watch out tomorrow. Watch out. Like you always need, you need to know when that siren goes off to take shelter.

Watch out. And he gives them two things to watch out for. And the first one he says is watch out for the leaven.

The leaven is basically this concept of they would take bread. It's like if you make sourdough bread, you take a little piece of this. You put it in the next batch of dough.

And what does the leaven do? It causes it to rise. So a little bit of Herod, we're going to get there, or a little bit, a little bit of worldly perspective, a little bit of power, a little bit of political desire, like a little bit of that. And you put that inside of Christ's follower.

Eventually it puffs you up. And a little bit of Pharisee, a little bit of legalism, a little bit of, I brought my Bible today. A little bit of that put inside of you, puffs you up.

And so Jesus says, what? Watch out. Watch out for the yeast of Herod. What is the yeast of Herod look like? It looks like hostility.

It looks like this, this phrase. It looks like, look out for number one, because ain't nobody else going to look out for you. If you ain't first, you're last.

It was a great philosopher said that. But the reality is, is this concept of the yeast of Herod is the concept that you will do anything you possibly can to gain power. You'll do everything you possibly can to gain prestige.

You'll do everything you possibly can to gain happiness. You'll do everything you possibly can that if you feel it, you do it. Herod basically, he believed in God.

He wanted God and he also wanted everything else because he thought he wouldn't have said this, but he thought he was smarter than God. Herod would have come to church services. We've talked about him before, but in church services, he'd have been thinking about, well, how can I use this phrase? How can I use this thought so that I can gain more finances? I can gain more power.

I can gain more leverage. I can gain, how do I manipulate this person? How can I be a slaveholder to a group of people I view as slaves? And I objectified. If you objectify the people around you, it's the yeast of Herod.

Hear me say this. Every single one of us in this room has pieces of the yeast of Herod in us. And if you don't recognize it, look again.

But what he's saying is, if you don't recognize it's there, it blows things up. What was Jesus? Well, Jesus was on a cross, was beaten, was accused, was mocked, and at any moment, he could have blinked his eyes and destroyed everybody. But he chose to be a lamb to the slaughter versus a dragon who fought in that moment.

Jesus didn't store up for himself treasures on earth, but he tells us to store up for ourselves treasures in heaven where moth and rust did not destroy, where thieves did not break in and steal. Jesus says, hey, let's take part of our offerings and build a house for someone who doesn't go to our church. Versus how can we get something really cool? Do you understand the yeast of Herod? Let's talk about the yeast of the faith.

I need to say this. The yeast of Herod, when you really dive into it, you feel like you can't be a part of a church. Does that make sense? Because the end of it, the more you go, the more you go, the more you go, the more you go, the more you go, you kind of feel ostracized from people that don't go down that same road.

You can just nod your heads. We've been there, right? We're gonna tell the story of the prodigal son here in a little bit. The son that went away, yeast of Herod.

Over here was the yeast of the Pharisees. What's the yeast of the Pharisees? The yeast of the Pharisees was this concept that I'm gonna find happiness by doing the right thing. I'm gonna check all the boxes.

I'm gonna do the right thing. I'm gonna eat the right food. I'm gonna wash my hands the right way.

Hear me say this. If you live according to God's ideals, life, honestly, it is actually, it's better. It really is.

Honestly, life is actually easier when you got a ton of money too. Like, let's just shoot straight here. But this idea of legalism, this concept here is they had an attitude of unbelief.

They didn't not believe in God. They believed in God, but they didn't believe God would move and act in their life. And they didn't believe that God cared about their moment to moment.

They see, they lived their lives looking at everyone else, diminishing them so they felt better about themselves. Their lunchtime meals were talking bad about other people. When they got in the car after practice, they diminished the other people on their team versus trying to pray for the people on their team.

They talked bad about their coaches. They talked bad about their bosses. They diminished everyone else because the reason they were diminishing or the reason that we diminish is because it makes us feel better about us.

The yeast of the Pharisees is, well, the Bible says this and I do this. You're right. That is what the Bible says.

And you do that. But for some reason, people who didn't know Jesus were drawn to him. And people that don't know Jesus are offended by you.

The yeast of the Pharisees puts rules and regulations around them that they can follow that make them feel safe and secure and make people on the outside feel like they can't belong. But Jesus actually, when a leper walked in the room and the Pharisees got out of the way because he was unclean, Jesus actually touched the leper. When the woman was found in adultery and she laid there naked on the dirt and everyone was ready to stone her, Jesus is the one that bent down right in the dirt there.

Whatever he wrote, I think he probably wrote their sins or other ladies' names or something. And then he looked at these men and said, hey, any of you who without sin, go ahead and throw that stone. And then he covered up that woman.

He held her. He wiped her tears. And he says, hey, girl, from now on, let's move from this place.

And there's no reason to do this again. Go and sin no more. A Pharisee never would step into this place.

And Jesus not only stepped into this place, but he wore this place. The yeast of the Pharisees makes you afraid of people that are different than you or afraid of people that disagree with you versus trying to learn and understand because the truth of God is greater than. But the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod, in some ways, this is Jesus saying, hey, guys, watch out because here's what's out there.

Are you with me? Here's the two lanes. Here's the two roads. You know, it's interesting to me.

Both yeast of Pharisees and yeast of Herod are absent from dependence on God. The Pharisees listen to what God said, but they're not dependent on God. They believe he exists.

They believe his rules are there, but they don't believe they should trust him. They still say, Lord, we don't have bread. So the prodigal son, right? There's a story.

The prodigal son, I'll tell it quick. It's not in this passage, but all week long, it was banging around in my head. I was like, Lord, why is this in my head? Then after I preached Wednesday, I was like, oh, that's why.

Because you have one son that goes to his father and he was loved by his father. He said, he says, Dad, I want to go. I want to do my own thing.

And the father gave him half of his inheritance. And so he leaves with the grace of the father. And when he leaves, what does he do? He wasted on all these kinds of things.

He chases power. He chases prestige. He chases happiness.

If it feels good, he does it. And he blows all of his money and he struggles. And everyone loved him when he had it.

And then when it was gone, no one talked to him. And he found himself at the lowest point in all of culture. He was wanting to eat what pigs eat, which in a Jewish culture is like you hit rock bottom.

And he's like, my dad's servants are treated better than this. I know my father well enough. He'll take me back.

Do you know him well enough to know he'll take you back? Because he will. And so then he comes back to the father. When he comes back to the father, what happens? The yeast of Herod comes back to Jesus.

Jesus says, bring me the yeast of Herod. And he hugs him. He hugs him with all of his pig slop on him.

He's willing to be defiled. He's literally the father's willing to become a curse. So the son feels loved.

Then he wraps him and he clothes him in Christ. He clothes him. Then he puts a ring on his finger saying, no, you are my son.

Even though you wasted your inheritance, you're still my boy. And then he puts shoes on his feet. He kills a cow.

And it's like filet mignon tonight, y'all. Like they had a party. And that was the yeast of Herod being reconciled to the father.

The yeast of the Pharisees just as big a part of this story. But isn't it interesting that your whole life in the church, what part of it do we focus on? Like the story of the prodigal, like what do you always hear about? Who wasted his life on hookers and drugs. But you know who's just a part of this story? A brother that walks in and sees a party and sees his brother and he knows he's wasted on hookers and drugs.

And he knows he's wasted his life. And he knows he's done all these things. And he walks in.

And every single day, he did the right thing. Every single morning, he made his bed. Every single morning, he got up.

Every single morning, he did his chores. Every single morning, he did exactly what his father wanted to do. He did what his father wanted to do because he wanted what his father had.

And he walked in, he says, he's mad. Like he wouldn't go to the party to welcome his brother home. And what's that show you? That the yeast of the Pharisee is inside of him.

That he was doing these things for his own good. He wasn't doing this for the love of his father or the love of his brother. I'm sorry for those in the room that maybe like felt like they could never belong in the church.

Because you felt like you just did enough stupid stuff and everyone knows about it. And they look at you funny and you felt judged. And maybe some of that, they weren't judging.

Maybe some of it, they were judging. I don't know. But I'm just really, really sorry.

But I want you to know the reason why you felt judged in the church was because there was another group of people that were struggling with being puffed up. They just weren't being puffed up with worldly perspective. They were being puffed up with religion.

They were just as guilty as you. Does that make sense? But that's why everybody's welcome. That's why this has to be a place that we're confronted on a daily basis.

For the moments, I'm too like, I live in the legalism of my life. Guys, that's what this is saying. It's saying, watch out, y'all.

Because if you base your life and you just do the right things, you don't try, just nod your heads. And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? I got convicted this week. You ready for it? I'm going to say it.

We're going to pray about it. And then I'm going to finish my sermon. And I might be a little long today.

We need more space at CU Church. And I've been praying about, Lord, help us with this. Help us figure this out.

But you know what I haven't been praying? God, you know what we could use? Someone just like give us a place that seats like three to 5,000 people. Haven't prayed that prayer. Guess what? I'm praying it.

He might not give us that. That's okay. He's the God that takes a Happy Meal and feeds 4,000.

We got more than a Happy Meal healed. Let's pray he does something like that. But that's like, I was falling into the trap, y'all.

I was falling into the processes and the plans and how do we figure out? It's like, God, here's the deal. There is hundreds of thousands of people in this area that desperately need Jesus. And right now people are finding Jesus here.

We could use like, Lord, come on. Like, please. Passage then goes on.

He says this. He says, why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do not yet perceive and understand. This is what he's asking.

Do you not get it that I'm the bread of life? Like, I'm the one that sustains you. I'm everything you need. Do you not understand that? And then he goes on and says it this way.

Okay, maybe you understand it, but then are your hearts hardened? Are you not listening to my spirit? Are you not trusting me? It's like in your life, in my life, when I struggle with things or when I don't pray the right things, I have to ask myself the question, is my heart hardened? Do I really believe Jesus is who he says he is? Do I really believe that He owns the cattle on a thousand hills? Like, he owns it. It's his. And if we need it, he can give it.

We just gotta what? Hey, dad, we could use some help here. And then it says these words in verse 18. I want you to remember what in the beginning did I talk about? He healed a deaf person first, right? Fed the 4,000.

Jesus is teaching through a moment. The moment's not over three weeks. It's over a moment.

Heals a deaf person, feeds 4,000 people, has this conversation. And this is what he says. Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember? Who does Jesus heal right after this conversation? A man born blind.

So he heals a blind man. He heals a deaf man. And he looks at them and says, do you not understand? When I broke the five loaves for 5,000, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up? They said to him, well, 12.

They shout out, 12, Jesus, 12. Put a star by my name. And the seven for the 4,000, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up? And they said to him, seven.

Seven, Jesus, seven, call on me. And he said to them, do you not get this? Without getting into the next couple of weeks sermon, I'm just gonna quickly tell you what happens next. Jesus then walks up to a blind man.

He walks up and he walks up and he walks up to David. And as he walks up to David, David says, I can't see. Jesus says, you're gonna be able to see.

And he heals David's eyes. And then Jesus says to David, he says, yo, David, can you see now? And David's like, ah, I see way better, but people kind of look like trees. It's kind of really foggy.

And then Jesus is like, oh, so you need more sight. Okay, I'm gonna heal you again. And then the man sees perfectly clearly.

So many of us in this room, we see Jesus. But it's kind of foggy because we got too much other stuff on our eyes, too much yeast. And today what we need to ask him is, Lord, I wanna see you so clearly that I cannot not trust you.

And then after he heals the blind man, heals the deaf man, do you not have ears to hear? Do you not have eyes to see? Heals the deaf, heals the blind. Then he looks at him and he says, ask this question. It's the question we're gonna end with.

Who do you think I am? Who am I? And these guys are like, some say a prophet, some say Elijah, some say this. And what's Peter say? Hey, you are the Christ, the son of the living God. My family, the sustainer, the creator, the savior, the alpha, the omega, the bread that sustains you, the water that quenches your thirst.

He is looking at us in this room and he is saying, who do you say that I am? And if you say you are the Christ, the son of the living God, his next question is, well then watch out because there's yeast of Herod in our lives and there's yeast of legalism in our lives. And the more we can take that out of our lives, the more we can walk in wholeness and fulfillment of who he is. People in this world today, they wanna seek happiness so much that it's like they become a hypochondriac to happiness.

That's all they're concerned about to the point that they literally drive themselves crazy and they're not very happy. And what the Lord wants us to do is seek goodness, seek love, seek truth, seek beauty. And in seeking those things, seeking Jesus, that's who he is.

Guess what you'll find? Wholeness and happiness. Hey y'all, four. Hey y'all, stay out of the corners.

I know it's easier to catch the ball there, but that's what Satan does. Let's watch out for the yeast of a worldly perspective and power and prestige. Let's watch out for the yeast of, I'm just doing it better than everyone else.

And let's actually be dependent on the savior of the world. Thank you for joining us for today's edition of Mark and Friends. Today we were reminded by Pastor Jason Epperson of CU Church that Jesus calls us to remember his faithfulness, guard our hearts against worldly thinking and empty religion and place our complete trust in him.

If today's program encouraged you, we invite you to continue learning by visiting the Mark and Friends page at GreatNewsRadio.org or WLUJ.org. There you'll find today's broadcast along with a growing collection of resources designed to help you dig deeper into God's word and continue your walk with Jesus. It's a wonderful way to revisit today's message, continue your study or share it with family and friends. Thanks for listening.

Thanks for being a part of our radio listening family. This is Mark Burns with the ministry of Great News Media. God bless you and have a great day and night.

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