

Don't Miss The Signs God Has Given You

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[0 : 00] What if you have missed the signs that God has sent in your life? Because you see, as we travel, each of us, along the road of life that God has given us, He puts signs along the way in everyone's life.

Some of those signs will warn us about what's up ahead. So that we can take the right action. Some of those signs will perhaps direct you to a turn-off you need to take in your life.

Have you noticed the signs in your life? Or have you missed them? Because we can tend to do that. You see, we can tend to, as we're traveling along this road of our life, we can tend to get so focused on the road ahead of us that we often don't see the signs.

They pass us by. Or worse, we see them, but we ignore them because we've already decided what way we want to go. And we just keep going our own way.

[1 : 18] What is it for you? Have you missed the signs? Well, today we're going to learn why people are prone to miss the signs that God gives in their life as we study what Jesus said.

First, to some religious leaders asking Him for a sign from God. And then, to His own disciples who, despite trying to see the signs God is sending them, had still missed signs that were right in front of them.

And we'll also find out how we are not that different to the disciples. And so let's look this morning, from this passage, I hope you have it open in front of you, Matthew 16, at two reasons, what we're going to discover this morning, two reasons people miss the signs that God gives.

That's what we're going to see. The first reason is just good old-fashioned stubbornness. That's the first reason we see that people miss the signs God sends.

We see this in the religious leaders that Jesus deals with from verse 1 of chapter 16. The Pharisees and the Sadducees came to Jesus and tested Him by asking Him to show them a sign from heaven.

[2 : 40] Okay, now, we've got to understand the context. We've been working through Matthew and we've been seeing all the things that Jesus had done.

Miracles that He had performed to show His authority, His power. And the Pharisees and the Sadducees had been looking on. They had seen these things and despite all that they had seen, still at this point, they want more evidence.

They still want to see more before they're convinced. And so Jesus replies to them here and basically says, No, you've actually already seen more than enough to make up your mind.

In fact, you make up your mind about other things that you're sure of with far less evidence. And then He uses, as an example, the weather.

He says, verse 2, When evening comes, you say it will be fair weather, for the sky is red. And in the morning, today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.

[3 : 44] You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. Okay, so He's actually using an old-fashioned weather rule that we still use today.

I don't know if you've, our version of it is, Red sky in the morning, sailors warning. Red sky at night, sailors delight. You've heard that? Or shepherd's delight, depending on, And every culture has a similar kind of weather rule.

And what's really interesting is that that, I looked it up, It's actually based on science. It's not just superstition. It actually works, the red sky in the morning and the evening thing. Because in most populated areas in the world, the mid-latitudes, weather systems move from west to east.

And so when the sun is rising in the east and it's a red sky, It's pointing out that there's a high pressure system to the east, Which means that there's going to be a storm. Anyway, I won't bore you with the details, but it actually works.

Red sky in the morning, sailors warning, red sky at night, sailors delight. The point that Jesus is making is that we all tend to make reasonable conclusions about things that we wouldn't otherwise know.

[4 : 51] Things we can't see right away, but we look at the signs and we make reasonable conclusions because of the signs we see. I don't know if you noticed last night, if you're in Plumstead at least, how windy it got.

Did you notice it got really windy? Even though it was such a calm day yesterday. Beautiful day yesterday. Just so calm. And yet the wind really picked up last night. Who would have known? Well, I'll tell you. My weather app knew. My weather app, I looked at it yesterday and I could see that the wind was going to pick up before it did. How can it do that? Is that magic? No. Weather people, meteorologists, look at the signs and they can actually tell us what's going to happen. This is what Jesus is referring to. This idea that we can see things that we wouldn't normally be able to see through the signs. And we make reasonable conclusions based on signs in our life. And yet people so often refuse to do that with the signs that God sends. Well, I'm not going to believe until God shows himself to me.

[5 : 57] Is that kind of person? You've heard that kind of reasoning. And it sounds reasonable. Of course, I'm not going to believe unless God shows me irrefutable evidence. That he shows himself to me.

But you know what? That's like saying. That's like saying, I'm not going to believe that there's rain coming tomorrow because I can't see it. And there is rain coming tomorrow, by the way. My weather app said. But now, imagine you said, well, I'm not going to believe that. And I'm like, well, the app says so. And look, your app also says it's a different app. But the weather means, no, no, I'm not going to believe it until I see it.

That's what people are saying when they say, I'm not going to believe God unless he shows me. But Jesus is saying, no, you have enough signs to make a reasonable conclusion about God. The truth is that God has already given us all the signs we need to know about him in this world. He has given signs throughout history and in our lives that he is there and he has something to say to you.

[7 : 06] The signs are there. And if you ignore those signs, the problem that Jesus shows here is not that you don't have enough evidence.

The problem is an unwillingness to see the evidence that God has already clearly given. An unwillingness even to look. And that is why Jesus goes on in verse 4, have a look, to say this. A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a sign. A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a sign. That sounds unreasonable.

What's wrong with looking for signs? But he's saying in the context of these Pharisees asking for signs when God has already clearly given them more than enough. To continue looking for signs. To continue demanding evidence. To continue demanding God answers all your questions. When God has already given you more than enough to work on. That is sinful stubbornness.

[8 : 11] Jesus calls it wicked and adulterous. To continue demanding God to show himself when he's already given you more than enough signs.

More than enough reason to believe that he's there and he has something to say to you. That's sinful, Jesus says. That's what these Pharisees and Sadducees were doing.

They were shutting their eyes and then complaining that they can't see anything. That's the logic here. Don't be like them.

Don't be like one of them. Do you believe in Jesus as the Messiah? As God's Son? As the Savior? Well, if you don't yet.

And if you don't, you're more than welcome to be here and to learn. But if you don't yet believe in Jesus. You need to ask yourself. Have you even looked at what God has shown you about him?

[9 : 12] And that's why we run Discover Jesus. That we're starting this week. For that particular purpose. So that you can look at what God has shown.

So that you can see it in front of you. Make educated decisions about these things. These are the most important things in your life. This life is quick. This life is mostly painful.

And it is passing away. And there is eternity waiting. And if you ignore all the things God has told you about eternity. And you just live this piddly little life. Chasing after a few pleasures.

And ignore what God has said. You are wasting the reason you're here. Don't waste your time. If you haven't done something like Discover Jesus. You should come and do that. You should invest that time. Many people come to faith through courses like that. I've heard of so many stories of people who didn't believe.

[10:09] They were atheists. Or they just thought that Christianity was just like every other religion. It's just something you believe by faith. If that's what you're into. But then they came to a course like that.

They saw what God has actually showed us. They saw the evidence. And they believed. They were converted. Because they saw things that they never thought we had. Signs that God has given us. Real evidence God has given us for these things. And so if you don't believe. And you've never done something like that. Taken a course where you look at the evidence.

Well let me tell you. That's on you. You can't use ignorance as an excuse before God. If you've never actually looked at what He's given us.

When you stand before your creator God one day. And He says, why did you reject my son? Why did you go your own way? I gave you all that you needed to know. And you say, well, you know, I wasn't convinced.

[11:07] I just, it wasn't clear enough. You know what He'll say? He'll say, no, you just didn't look. Don't, don't spend your life speeding right past the signs that God has put in your life.

Come to discover Jesus if you haven't done something like that. And look at what God has given us. Look at the signs. Because those signs are in here.

Those signs are all in here. The signs God has given you. You ask Him for a sign. They're here. They're right here. All of the signs God has given. There's this comic. I love it. Put it on screen for us, Adrian.

It's one of my favorites. Just a two-panel comic. Lord, speak to me. For those listening on the recording, there's this guy kneeling down and he's looking up to heaven. Lord, speak to me. The next panel is a hand coming down from heaven with a Bible.

God speaks. God speaks to us through His Word. Now, you might think, oh, yes, but that's general stuff that God says to us. But I want God to speak to me directly in my life.

[12:11] I want signs in my life. I want God to speak to me. Well, that's the thing. He also does that through His Word and His Spirit with His people. When you gather around this Word with God's people and His Holy Spirit is there, He speaks directly to you into your life and into your circumstances.

That's what we do at Growth Group. That's why we do Growth Group. So that we can gather around God's Word and not just hear the amazing general truths about life and about this world and about God's plans and salvation, but we actually, through the Holy Spirit making this alive for us, we hear what God is saying into my circumstances, into my job, into my relationship that I have with this person that's difficult, all the different circumstances of life.

God speaks. You can't say, God, speak to me, and then sit at home when He's saying, we'll gather around my Word with people, and I will.

And so, do you still need signs? Are you still saying, God, show me signs? Speak to me well? If you don't come to Growth Group, where God wants to speak to you, if you don't open His Word in your life, well, that's just another version of the stubbornness of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, who were too stubborn to see what God has already given them.

And so, that's the first reason we might miss the signs God gives us in our life, just plain stubbornness. We're not willing to look and take the effort of seeing what He's already given us.

[13:44] But there's another reason, the second reason we might miss it, that we might miss the signs God gives us in our lives, is distraction. Distraction, and that's what we see next.

Okay, because that is another reason we might miss. So, we might be thinking, for the rest of the sermon, you might be thinking, you know, that microphone thing, I'm still hearing it, and miss everything that I say. Okay, that's what happens with God as well.

We get distracted. We miss what He says. And this can happen even to committed Christians. And we see this next. Committed Christians who are really wanting to hear God can miss what He says because they're distracted by more immediate concerns.

That's what happened to Jesus' disciples. Look at from verse 5. When they went across the lake, the disciples forgot to take bread. Be careful, Jesus said to them.

Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. They discussed this among themselves and said, it is because we didn't bring any bread.

[14:54] Okay, so Jesus is trying to give them some really important teaching here. But they're so caught up with their immediate concerns that it goes right over their head.

Verse 8, Jesus says, aware of the discussion, Jesus asked, you of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? You see what He's saying?

He's saying, you're not hearing me. And He says, you have little faith. That's a weird thing to say because they're missing what He's saying. But He's saying that their faith has not picked up what He's saying.

You need faith. You need eyes of faith to understand these truths that Jesus teaches. And He's saying, you've missed it. You haven't seen it. You don't understand what I'm saying.

And the reason that they had this little faith that couldn't pick up what Jesus was saying was because they were too focused on themselves. Did you notice that?

[15:53] They're looking at their own provisions, their own bread. Oh, did we bring enough bread? Is Jesus talking about our bread? Like, it's not a... Jesus, I'm not talking about you. Okay? I'm not talking about your little concerns.

I'm talking about something much more important. They were too focused on themselves, though. But it's not just them, is it? We can also do exactly the same thing.

We can get so caught up in our own lives and our own problems, and we want answers to those things. We want God to talk into those situations. We want answers to all our problems that we miss what God is actually saying.

That's a really bad way to read the Bible, to try to find all the solutions to your problems, and then you find some special verse that talks about...

And then you write and you put it in the fridge. There's nothing wrong with putting verses on fridges, but often we only will focus in on the things that answer our questions or solve our problems.

[16:52] And we miss what God is actually trying to say in His Word. That's what His disciples are doing here. And also Jesus goes on to show that this is not the first time His disciples have done this.

He goes on to say, Oh, and while we're on the topic of bread, remember that time that I fed thousands of people twice? Those feeding miracles that I did?

Did you even get what they were actually about? From verse 9. Do you still not understand? Don't you remember the five loaves for the 5,000?

And how many basketfuls you gathered? Or the seven loaves for the 4,000? And how many basketfuls you gathered? So you're saying to them, Guys, you didn't see what those miracles were actually about, did you?

You thought that was just all about solving your problem of not having enough bread in the wilderness. That's all you thought the miracles were about, that I can solve your problems.

[18:05] But you completely missed what they were really meant to tell you about me, Jesus is saying. And so what were those miracles meant to tell us about Jesus?

Maybe you missed that. We studied them just a couple of weeks ago, both of them. What were they meant to do? Do you even remember? It's so easy for us to miss stuff, isn't it?

The sign to go right past, and we just carry on with our lives. What did they tell us about Jesus? Well, I'll remind you. A quick summary.

Those miracles, and the reason that those are recorded for us, the way they were written, is that they're meant to remind us of Exodus. Right back in the Old Testament, right at the beginning, where God saved His people, Israel, by bringing them out of Egypt, and bringing them to the Promised Land.

And what Jesus is showing by doing that again, by repeating that, is that God is now doing that through Jesus. He is saving His people, and He is bringing them to a new land, a promised land, a new kind of life.

[19:16] But He is doing this not just for Israel, but for all people around the world. That's what those feeding miracles, and even the numbers of the baskets left over, were meant to tell us.

The first miracle done for the Jews, 12 baskets, 12 tribes of Israel. The next miracle, done for the wider Gentiles, seven baskets, seven days of creation, completeness.

You can go into it, but you see, there was much more going on in those miracles than we thought. God was showing us something about His Son, Jesus. That Jesus is the one who has come to fulfill God's ultimate plans for this world.

That the whole Bible, all the signs that God has done in history throughout the Old Testament, has always been pointing to Jesus. The whole Bible is about Him.

All of the Old Testament looks forward to Jesus. All of the New Testament reflects back on Jesus. Jesus is the center, not just of the Bible, but of all God's plans for this entire world.

[20 : 21] He is the most important man in history. He is more important than anything else in this world and in your life. And until you realize that, you've also missed the point.

The Bible is not about you. It's about Him. Everything is about Jesus. And everything that God has done in this world is about His Son. But unfortunately, it's easy for people to miss that.

Even Christians. People can read the Bible their whole lives and miss the point. And not realize what it's actually all about.

I've seen it. People can come to church for ages. People have been, you know, they go, I've come across people who go to church for years, decades.

And then they come to our church who hopefully we're doing a decent job at really opening up the Bible and seeing what it's really saying. And they say, and I've heard this multiple times, this is the first time I'm hearing this.

[21 : 32] I've been going to church for decades and this is the first time I'm seeing how it all fits together. You see, it's easy for people to miss the point.

And the reason is because so often they follow teachers who don't teach them about who Jesus really is. They'll use the Bible, but they'll teach them a whole lot of other things.

They'll teach them about how God makes your life better. How you can live a victory life. They'll teach them about, basically, it's all about you and how God can help you.

So many sermons are actually about that. And they all miss the point. And that is why Jesus is so adamant in this passage to warn His disciples here to be careful of who they listen to.

Did you notice that? That's His major warning. Be careful who you listen to. Twice. He says, there in verse 6, be careful, be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

[22 : 42] And we find out later He's talking about the things they teach. The Pharisees and the Sadducees. Now these were actually the official, orthodox, Bible teachers of the day.

Okay, and Jesus is saying, their teaching is dangerous. for you. It's corrupting. It gets in and it corrupts you.

They might sound biblical. Their teachings might sound biblical. They were, after all, the leaders of Israel. But actually, their teaching will harm you because it's not about Jesus.

Because they're missing the point. So there's this dangerous teaching that He's warning His disciples against. But how today do we know what that teaching is? How do we guard against that?

How do we obey this? And guard against the yeast teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. They're not around anymore. What is that teaching today that we've got a guard against?

[23 : 42] How do we spot it? Well, it's actually quite easy. Anything that is more focused on you than on Jesus is harmful teaching.

If you're listening to sermons or you're watching Bible teachers on YouTube and they're really great and they're charismatic and they're just, they're so fun to listen to, so easy to listen to, but they don't, those sermons or those YouTube videos are not helping you to know Jesus more, well then you've missed the point.

They've missed the point. And that teaching is not only useless for you, it is also harmful for you because it is teaching you stuff from the Bible but it's not taking you to Jesus which is what the whole Bible is about.

So it's teaching you wrong stuff. It's teaching you stuff that's going to harm you. And here's another thing. You don't need it. You don't need those teachings even if they sound really good, even if they sound really helpful for your life.

You don't need them. You know how I know this? Because all you need is Jesus. All you need. You don't need in your life, you don't need anything beyond Jesus.

[25 : 01] He is what it's all about. He is what this creation is all about. He is what the universe is all about. He is the center of it all. He is the Son of God.

He is the one God created all of us to glorify. It's all about Him. You don't need anything more than Him. And His disciples didn't.

We go on to see. Even though they were so easily duped, and they were, weren't they? They were pretty dull. But then again, they're a mirror to us.

Even though they were so easily duped, and they didn't quite know what was going on, and even after 15 chapters, they still hadn't got it, they came out okay. We actually see in the very next passage, next week's sermon, we see that they finally got it.

Who He is. Why? How did they finally get it? Despite all the confusion and the false teachings going around, I'll tell you how. They kept following Jesus.

[26 : 03] They stuck close to Jesus. They kept Him in the center. And you don't need more than they did.

You don't need more than Jesus in your life. And you know, all good Bible teaching will take you to Him. Will take you closer to Jesus.

That's why the Apostle Paul, who wrote a large chunk of the New Testament, writes these words in Colossians to the Colossian Christians.

He says about them, about the people He's ministering to. He says, My goal is that they may know the mystery of God, namely Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. That's why Paul wrote about himself in Philippians. And he said, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

[27 : 12] And it's why he wrote to the Corinthians who were asking all kinds of different complicated theological questions. He said, You know, Jews demand science.

And Greeks look for wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God.

It is all about Him. It is all in Him. All of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, all of the power of God and the wisdom of God is found in Jesus Christ. It's all about Him and it always has been.

And so, as you travel the road of your life, if you want to make sure you don't miss the signs God is sending, make Jesus the center.

follow Him. Listen to Him. Listen to Him. Because that is how you'll find your way. Let's pray. Lord God, we praise You that You have spoken and we thank You that You have shown us that it is all about Your Son, Jesus Christ, that there is nothing outside of Him that we need.

[28 : 40] And so we pray, Lord, for all of us that You would help us to focus our lives on Him, to make Him the center, to stop ignoring Him and to follow Him into life.

In Jesus' name. Amen.