

## **What Do You See?**

(Mark 8:22-26)

(preached 3/8/15 Pine Grove BC; Sunday AM)

### **Introduction**

While we were in seminary in California, Tonya and I would come up with unique ways to have date nights with one another.

Since we had no family there and our budget was tight, we would often use the time after the kids were in bed...

To sit up and watch a movie or TV show together.

Well, someone recommended that we watch a TV series that was available on Netflix.

And so, we did.

The series was full of action and adventure but it was also nerve racking and full of twists and turns.

It got so bad that I almost just went to the last episode in the season and watched it so I wouldn't have to suffer through 10 more shows before I knew how it ended.

And that is really an incredible possibility today.

In times past, you would have to wait a week and then sit through an hour of the show and the commercials before you found out how it ended.

Now, you can buy a whole season without commercials.

You can even skip over shows if you like.

You can even watch the last show first, figure out how it ends and then you don't even have to endure the whole season.

Now obviously, that is not the way that it should be watched but it is a possibility.

The same could be said about a book.

You could buy a novel and go to the final pages and read the ending first if you like.

But then, there would be no need to read the beginning.

With that in mind, I want to remind you of a great error in Bible reading at times...

And that is the error of not seeing the context of a passage.

It is the problem that most people experience in Bible study...

When they simply say that they get up in the morning and wherever their Bible falls open, they read.

Now, can God use any passage to teach you?

Sure, He can.

He breathed out every word of the Bible.

But often times, we play Bible roulette by flipping through the pages and hoping it lands on something good.

And what we fail to realize when we do that is that the Bible tells a story much like any book.

IT has a beginning, middle and end.

And when we fail to understand that, we often fail to understand what a passage means in the context of the entire Bible.

That is why on Sunday nights we are going through the entire Bible and getting a bird's eye view of every book..

And I think that those of you who are coming on Wednesday night agree that God is writing a story so far in the Bible.

We have made it through 2 Samuel so far and there is a definite series of events that we are following much like the storyline of a TV show.

And I think for those of you who have been here on Sunday mornings in Mark, we are following a definite storyline in the pages of this book as well.

We have followed Jesus from baptism to temptation to ministry.

We have followed him around Galilee and across the sea of Galilee and back to Capernaum and up to Tyre and down to Decapolis and now back to Galilee.

And there is a clear story that is being told here.

I say all that to say that the Bible is not a randomly collection of stories that God threw together last minute.

And again, to be clear...

Can you read in Genesis and then go to Acts and then go to Isaiah and benefit?

Sure you can, but even then it is helpful to understand the context of what you are reading.

For instance, if you saw a picture of me behind this pulpit in shorts and a T-shirt, you would think that means one thing.

But if I told you that the picture was taken on a Saturday morning while I was placing my notes under the pulpit, your view of that pic may change.

Well, we are coming to a passage this morning where the context is going to add to the meaning of what is happening.

So, let's just begin by reading the passage before us this morning...

So, take your Bibles and turn with me to Mark 8:22-26....

And let's simply begin by reading this passage...

***22 And they \*came to Bethsaida. And they \*brought a blind man to Jesus and \*implored Him to touch him. 23 Taking the blind man by the hand, He brought him out of the village; and after spitting on his eyes and laying His hands on him, He asked him, "Do you see anything?" 24 And he [o]looked up and said, "I see men, for [p]I see them like trees, walking around." 25 Then again He laid His hands on his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and began to see everything clearly.***

*<sup>26</sup> And He sent him to his home, saying, “Do not even enter the village.”*

That is a pretty simple passage to understand.

The interpretation is clear.

Jesus heals a blind man in Bethsaida.

And grade school child could read that story and see what happened.

But I want to help our understanding of it by looking at a few things that surround this passage.

Where and when this happened is very important, but equally important is trying to find out why Mark placed this story where he did in his gospel.

In fact, Mark is the only one to record this miracle.

Jesus is going to heal other blind men, but Mark is the only one to write about this blind man in Bethsaida...

And the question is why and also why does he place it here in chapter 8?

Well, I think we need to look beyond the story to some things around the story...

And what I want to do today is to break this message up in 3 parts..

## **I. Seeing the Place**

## **II. Seeing the Phenomenon**

## **III. Seeing the Point**

So, let's begin to get to the bottom of this by looking at the place where this miracle occurs...

## **I. Seeing the Place**

By the time we get to this point in Mark's gospel we have a pretty crazy map of Jesus' journey.

But for the most part in Mark, he has been in the northern part of Israel.

Now, we all know his ultimate destination in all the gospel.

Jesus is headed to the cross.

He is headed to die in the place of guilty sinners, and that cross is going to be outside the city of Jerusalem.

And that is in the southern part of Israel.

Jesus' public ministry is nearing an end and so is his life.

And if you look in every gospel (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) Jesus does something really interesting as he prepares to make the journey south to Jerusalem and to the cross.

He goes to the very northern part of Israel..

To an area known as Caesarea Philippi.

In fact, we will arrive there next week.

But today, Jesus is making his way there with his disciples.

IF you remember from last week, we saw a huge fork in the road of Jesus' ministry.

The Jewish religious leadership and the majority of Jews in general have rejected Jesus' claims to be from God.

They have claimed that Jesus is actually an agent of Satan.

They are trying to destroy him because their hearts are filled with unbelief.

Even though they have seen enough signs from Jesus to prove over and over that he is in fact God in the flesh, they have refused to believe.

And we saw last week in Mark 8:13 that Jesus walks away from their unbelief.

He has no more interest in trying to convince them.

He told them that they would get no more signs.

And in an act of throwing his hands in the air in frustration, he walks away from them and from the region of Galilee.

And from here on out, the focus of Jesus will be on training his disciples.

And they certainly need a lot of training.

We saw last week that they were some pretty hard headed men.

But we also saw a ray of hope last week in their behavior.

Not only did they leave the Pharisees behind like Jesus, they actually began to learn a few things.

Though Mark failed to mention it, they were slowly understanding who Jesus was.

They were slowly seeing that the religious system that they had all grew up in was corrupt.

They were beginning to understand that the “religious people” of their day weren’t so religious after all.

The people who said they loved God were more lovers of their man made rules and traditions.

The people that the disciples looked up to as being holy in fact had no interest in the things of God.

They simply were only concerned with how they looked to others.

Jesus was slowly exposing the hypocrisy of the religious people in Judaism...

And the disciples were slowly understanding it.

Now look, that is easy to understand.

There are very few things in life that you get the first time you are exposed to it.

I remember the first time one of my good friends tried to explain the workings of a car motor to me.

Now, let me explain.

I do good to find the gas cap every time we fill the car up.

And although my dad is good with cars, I never paid attention.

But my friend, who has a lot of mechanical knowledge, took me under the hood and tried to teach me.

And although I still know very little, I actually know more than I did.

I still don't know a lot, so please don't come quiz me about engine sizes...

“If a 429 will fit in 66 Ford or if a 9/16 will fit a dual exhaust on a 70 Nova..”

I still don't know, but I have learned and I will continue to learn.

That is where the disciples are at this point in their growth.

They are understanding just a little, but they have enough knowledge at this point to follow Jesus rather than stay with the religious system that they have always known.

And so they are with Jesus as he heads north to Caesarea Philippi.

Here is a map of the region and I want you to notice what town is on the way north.

It is none other than Bethsaida.

We have already been here before with Jesus back in Mark 6 when he fed 5000 men here along with their families.

So, it was more like 20000 people that he had fed in this region already.

This time when He comes into town on his way north, they all know who HE is and so they bring a blind man to Him.

Now, that we see the place...let's turn to....

## **II. Seeing the Phenomenon**

Once the blind man is brought to Jesus, we see Jesus do something that we have seen before...

He first takes the blind man away from the crowds.

Sound familiar?

It should because that is what He did with the deaf and mute man...

And then we see another thing that is common to both situations...

Jesus uses his saliva as part of the healing.

He spits on the man's eyes and then touches his eyes again.

This would be necessary to show the man that Jesus was in front of him with one purpose in mind...

To fix his eyes.

Now, one note here that we can't overlook.

The Old Testament is filled with predictions of Israel's future...

And a lot of those predictions are about a day that is still future to us when Israel will prosper in the land.

The Jews were very familiar with these promises of future prosperity...

And we are going to talk about this idea more as we get deeper into Mark...

And the reason that most Jews rejected Jesus is because He refused to become the king that would lead them into this golden age.

They never understood that their King must die for their sin first...

Before he could reign and bring about this incredible kingdom.

But to show that He was in deed the King of that coming kingdom, Jesus did miracles that will be true in that future kingdom.

Let me illustrate it like this....

Say I stood up here this morning and said...

“I am the greatest golfer that ever lived.”

Well, you would ask me to prove it.

I would say, well there is no golf course here, but let's all go outside and I will hit a few golf balls for you.

And I step up there and hit 3 beautiful shots.

And though you may still have doubts, you would likely be more closed to being convinced if those three shots were excellent.

Well, when Jesus came to earth, it wasn't the time in God's plan for His kingdom to come.

So Jesus wasn't sent to bring in God's perfect kingdom on his first visit, he was sent to die for sin.

But Jesus gave some incredible evidences that He was in fact the great King who would one day bring God's kingdom to earth.

And at times, he showed proof of his claim to be that King.

In the book of Isaiah, there are lots of passages that describe the future kingdom that will come to earth.

And in chapter 35 of Isaiah, there is a passage that describes the future conditions of that kingdom.

I want to read that passage to you this morning..

***<sup>1</sup>The wilderness and the desert will be glad,  
And the <sup>[a]</sup>Arabah will rejoice and blossom;  
Like the crocus***

***<sup>2</sup>It will blossom profusely  
And rejoice with rejoicing and shout of joy.  
The glory of Lebanon will be given to it,  
The majesty of Carmel and Sharon.***

*They will see the glory of the Lord,*

*The majesty of our God.*

*<sup>3</sup> Encourage the <sup>[b]</sup>exhausted, and strengthen  
the <sup>[c]</sup>feeble.*

*<sup>4</sup> Say to those with anxious heart,*

*“Take courage, fear not.*

*Behold, your God will come with vengeance;*

*The recompense of God will come,*

*But He will save you.”*

*<sup>5</sup> Then the eyes of the blind will be opened*

*And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped.*

*<sup>6</sup> Then the lame will leap like a deer,*

*And the tongue of the mute will shout for joy.*

One incredible truth about that kingdom is that physical problems will disappear.

You will never have to worry about an HMO, a PPO, or Medicare in that kingdom.

Diseases will be banished.

It will be a glorious day when that is true.

And one thing that every Jew knew is that the Messiah will bring in that kingdom.

He will be the One to bring about that day.

And they knew that if they ever encountered Someone who could unstop the ears of the deaf...

Repair the tongue of the mute...

Make the lame leap for joy...

And what else???

Open the eyes of the blind..

They knew that He would be that King.

And if you think over the ministry of Jesus here in Mark...

What have we seen?

A lame man was lowered through the roof and walked away on his own two feet...

We have also seen a deaf and mute man leave hearing and speaking.

And now we get to witness a blind man regain his sight.

This won't be the last time that we see this, but any Jew who knew anything about the OT knew that only the Messiah could open the eyes of the blind.

It was a clear preview of the kingdom that had been promised to them and to the world.

So, this is no ordinary miracle.

As if any miracle is ordinary, but this is a look in the kingdom that is coming.

In fact, when John the Baptist sent his disciples to ask Jesus if he was the promised King and Messiah...

What did Jesus tell them to report to John?

Luke 7:20...

***<sup>20</sup> When the men came to Him, they said, “John the Baptist has sent us to You, to ask, ‘Are You the<sup>[o]</sup> Expected One, or do we look for someone else?’”<sup>21</sup> At that <sup>[u]</sup>very time He cured many people of diseases and afflictions and evil spirits; and He gave sight to many who were blind.<sup>22</sup> And He answered and said to them, “Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the gospel preached to them.***

It is clear that only the Messiah...only the King of kings can give sight to the blind..

And so Jesus proceeds with this incredible healing by spitting and touching the man's eyes...

And then asking him...

“Do you see anything?”

To which the man gives a most unusual response...

***I see men for I see them like trees, walking around...***

Don't get too caught up in that answer..

I think most likely this man has not been blind from birth...

He probably knew what trees and men were from past experience...

Or if he had been blind from birth...

He had probably touched both and was familiar with their shapes and sizes...

What is important to see here is that this is the only healing that Jesus did in two stages...

I'll offer my thought on why that was in a moment, but that is what we see here..

Because at first he could only see partially, but then Jesus lays his hands on him again and he then sees everything clearly.

He then sends the man off but tells him not to go back to the village.

Once again, this was to prevent him from telling everyone about the healing...

And causing people to see Jesus only as a miracle worker..

And with that, there is but one part for us to examine in this passage...

WE have seen the PLACE.

WE have seen the PHENONMENON that happened there...

Now, we need to take a brief amount of time.....

### **III. Seeing the Point**

What is the purpose of Mark placing this encounter with the blind man here?

Well, Jesus is focusing his attention of the disciples.

He is trying to train them for ministry.

And what they see here for the first time is Jesus healing a man in tow stages.

HE touches him and he sees a little bit, but then he touches him and he sees it all perfectly clear.

Now, if you think about what has been happening and what is about to happen in the gospel of Mark.

I think we get some help in understanding why Mark included this miracle in his gospel.

If we look back at verses 11-13 in chapter 8, what do we find?

Jesus is describing the spiritual blindness of the Pharisees...

They want a sign, but He refuses because they are too blind to see it.

You ever been in a situation so dark that you literally couldn't see your hand in front of your face?

Well, that is the darkness of the Pharisees..

And then we looked at the disciples last week in verses 14-21...

And though it certainly wasn't clear as day for the disciples, they had enough light that they began to understand a little bit...

That is like the moments before sunrise...

It is still dark but there is a hint of light in the sky....

And then we have this miracle today...

But guess what happens next week?

And I won't ruin it for you completely...

But next week, Peter and the disciples are going to get it..

Because Peter is going to utter the famous words that no person in the entire gospel of Mark has said up to this point...

Now, the demons have said it, but no person in Mark has said what Peter and the disciples will say next week...

Because they are going to say that Jesus is in fact the Messiah...

He is the King...

He is the Christ, the Son of God.

Mark 8:29 is going to the high point of this gospel...

The disciples are going to understand clearly and confess clearly who Jesus is...

Yea, they are still going to mess up at times, but they first get it right next week in the verses that immediately follow this passage.

And I think when we look at this section in light of that, we see the point of this miracle.

Jesus gave sight to this blind man in stages...

Clear vision didn't come all at once.

He saw some and then he saw clearly.

And that seems to be a clear illustration of what happened to the disciples...

They understood a little and then they understood clearly.

They went from not getting everything right to getting the most important thing right.

They went from limited vision to full vision.

Just like this blind man, they went from blurred sight to 20/20 sight...

But it took time.

It didn't all come at once.

Now in Mark, it seems to happen fast...

But it really doesn't.

The disciples have been learning from chapter 1 and 2 when they were called to follow Jesus...

And even when Peter makes that wonderful statement next week, the learning still isn't over...

They will learn and grow and sin and go back and grow...

And they will grow even more when the Holy Spirit comes in the book of Acts...

But I think the point here in Mark is to see that spiritual sight doesn't always happen right away..

IT doesn't always happen over night.

Or in a flash...

Sometimes, spiritual sight is a process...

It may or may not take time.

## **Conclusion**

Let me end with two simple applications for all of us in here this morning from this passage...

The first is this...

Be patient with other Christians' spiritual growth.

It may have taken you years to understand and be at your level of spiritual maturity.

So, don't expect everyone else to get it in a matter of minutes or days or just a few months.

Some see clearly very quickly, and some crawl for a while before they walk.

Now, that is no excuse to be lazy in your spiritual growth.

You should be always moving forward.

The baby rolls over....starts getting on fours....crawls.....pulls up....walks....then runs....

You need to be progressing in your growth...

You need to be reaching and pulling up and challenging yourself....

The goal is to run, not to crawl....

The goal is meat, not milk....

But mature believers need to be careful with our expectations as well...

Jesus didn't rebuke the man and say....

“What in the world....you see men as trees...”

That's crazy...Look harder...

No, he touched him....asked him what he saw....and touched him again...

Patience...not frustration....

The second application I want to offer is this....

Salvation is not always a light comes on experience...

And I want to be real careful here...

For one very important reason....

I have no idea how many breaths you have in your lungs or how beats you have left in your heart...

There is an urgency to salvation.

Every time I get up to preach, my job is to point to the urgency of repentance and trust in Christ alone...

Because I simply don't know who I may not ever see again.

I carry that burden to preach the gospel and to call sinners to repentance very seriously in my life.

But I also want to say this....

11:55 to 12 noon on Sunday is not the magical salvation window each week...

If you ever have questions about how to be saved...

Or any other spiritual need, I am your pastor and I am available down front each week.

But I want to be clear....

When I pray and we close each week, the salvation window doesn't close with the invitation time.

God saves people in incredible ways.

Some people have those moments of instant salvation, where God moves them in an instant to see their need to be saved and they act...

But others may simply come to be saved over time...

For me, I started asking questions about churches and their beliefs...

I started visiting churches..

I read the Bible.

I read some other books...

I considered some things.

I asked more questions.

And that may be true of you.

But I will say this...

When the Lord prompts you to repent and believe,  
you need to do it wherever that happens...

If that is a couch in your home....

Or at work...or in your car...

Or in the middle of the night...

You stop what you are doing....you turn from sin  
and you turn to Christ....

And then simply share that truth with another  
Christians..

Share it with a church or a pastor...

God may have been working on you for some time  
and this morning you may have come to make your  
repentance and belief public...

And that is great.

You come forward and let us know and we will celebrate with you....

And we will be here as a church to help you gain more understanding.....

I want to close by asking every single one of you the same question that Jesus asked that blind man in the middle of his healing?

“What do you see?”

-Do you simply see what you are getting ready to eat for lunch?

-Do you only see the hands of your watch going past 12 noon?

-Do you only see the thing that you will be doing after church?

- Do you merely see the back of your eyelids as you sleep peacefully while God’s word is being preached?

-What do you see this morning...

For the saved in here, I pray that you see the glories of Jesus yet again in the Bible.

How the Son of God is able to give sight to the blind.

How the King gave all of us a preview of a kingdom without disease and illness.

For the unbeliever in here this morning, I pray that you get your eyes off your lunch and your watch and your hobbies and open them up from your sleep...

And I pray that you see 4 things very clearly...

I pray that you see your sin very clearly this morning.

I pray that you see God's holiness very clearly this morning...

And I pray that you see the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as your only hope.

I pray that you stop seeing your good works as what will make you right with God...

I pray that you will stop seeing this world as your only goal in this life...

And I pray that you will clearly see that your days upon this earth may be fewer than you think.

Let us pray.

