

**Jesus' Power over Blindness**

Scripture: Mark 8:22–26

Code: 41-39

I want you to open your Bible to the eighth chapter of Mark's gospel. Each of these paragraphs, each of these sections is unique. They vary in emphases and tone and theology. It's hard to be consistent in falling into some kind of pattern week in and week out because they're so unique, these marvelous records of the historical events of the life of our love. Sermons change in form and style from week to week, depending on the nature of the text.

And I say simply to say this week we're going to be looking at a story of a miracle in verses 22 to 26 and at first reading you could say we read the story and thank the Lord for the miracle and pronounce the benediction because it's simple enough for a child to understand, it doesn't need a lot of explanation and embellishment. It is a jewel to be sure, as all the miracles of Jesus are, but it's the setting in which its placed that gives it significant meaning. And at the risk of being a little bit technical, I want to make sure you understand, not just the story but the significance of the story and how it sits in the gospel of Mark, in the chronology of the life of Christ, in the place of instruction regarding the disciples and how that applies to us.

So we're going to look at three things...the significance of the story will be the final thing we'll look at. The story itself, but before we do that we'll even look at the setting in which the story is told. This may seem a little bit more like a classroom and that's okay as well because we want you to learn together.

Chapter 8 and verse 22, "And they came to Bethsaida. And they brought a blind man to Jesus and implored Him to touch him. 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?' And he looked up and said, 'I see men, for I see them like trees walking around.' Then again He laid His hands on his eyes and he looked intently and was restored and began to see everything clearly. And He sent him to his home saying, 'Do not even enter the village.'"

Now if you've been with us in Mark, there's some familiar things there, aren't there? You could say, "I perfectly well understand this," and you would be likely correct. But I want to enrich the setting and the significance of this, if I can.

First of all, we cannot become so familiar with miracles that we overlook the reality of what a stunning thing a miracle was in that era of human history. Diseases were everywhere. There really was no knowledge of what caused disease. There were no cures for anything. The first real cure didn't appear till the nineteenth century. Whatever you had, you had and you lived with it. And the concoctions that were offered for curing diseases were bizarre and humorous, if not pathetic. The cure for blindness, according to one very trusted source was rooster blood mixed with honey smeared on the eyes.

Birth defects and venereal disease and lack of sanitation, infections, accidents, diseases all

contributed to people being blind and a lot of people were blind and, in fact, John the Baptist sent some of his followers to Jesus to see if He was actually the Messiah, because, although John had introduced Him as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, it didn't seem that He was either taking away the sin of the world or establishing the Messianic Kingdom and John wanted to check in and make sure he had the right person, and so they said, "Are You really the Christ or do we look for somebody else? Our teacher, John, wants to know."

And Jesus responded in a most interesting way, He responded by saying in one statement, "Tell John the blind receive their sight." This was a mark of His ministry in a world where no one was ever cured really of anything. Blind people were usually outcasts. They were viewed as having been cursed by God. That's why in John 9 the leaders of Israel come to Jesus and they discredit Him every way they can, you remember the story, even though He had just healed a man born blind. Remember the story in John 9? And you remember the testimony of the man when they said, "Who is this Jesus?" And he said, "I don't know who He is, but I do know I used to be blind and now I can see."

And you remember how they launched the conversation? They said, "Who sinned, this man or his parents?" John 9:1 and 2. Because if you were blind, according to their theology, you had been cursed by God and that would be true of any deformity, any defect, any disease. Their theology basically lined up with Job's friends who assumed that because Job was having a lot of trouble, there was a lot of sin present. And so they were put out of the synagogue, these kinds of people, and they were alienated from normal social activity and life and perhaps only their family and friends would even so much as touch them, they were the untouchables. Pharisees wouldn't touch them, Sadducees, other separatists didn't want to touch them. Rabbis didn't want to touch them.

So these people are in a desperate category. You have to understand again that for Jesus to step into that world at that time with that massive amount of illness as a part of life and a theology that went along with that kind of rampant illness that basically said you're being cursed by God, and just literally dispatch disease out of the land of Israel and cured everybody who came to Him, there was a huge statement being made about the compassion of God and the power of Christ. I mean, there wouldn't have been nothing like this in the memory of anyone because there had never been anything like this in the history of the world.

So, we can't discount just because it's another story the massive impact of the revelation of Jesus Christ as the one who banished illness from Israel during the years of His ministry. Jesus did thousands of miracles. This is just one. But it just so happens to have a unique setting and unique significance.

Let me talk about the setting, if I may, just kind of set up the story. First of all, it has the uniqueness of being one of two miracles that you find only in Mark. There are many miracles that Matthew and Luke tell, that Matthew, Luke and John tell, that are in more than one gospel therefore. There are only two in the gospel of Mark that aren't anywhere else and these two appear...this one and one in chapter 7, where Jesus healed the one who was a deaf mute. Remember that, back in verse 32 of chapter 7? And it's interesting to read it because of the parallels. They brought to Him one who was deaf, just as they brought the blind man. They implored Him to lay His hand on him, just as they asked for the blind man that Jesus would touch him. And again, Jesus took him aside from the crowd, just as He did the blind man, taking him out of the village. He put His fingers into His ears, touched him, spit, touched his tongue just as He touched the blind man's eyes and put spit on them.

And then again in verse 36 He gave them orders not to tell anyone, just as He did with the case of the blind man we just read.

So there are some similarities in these two accounts, which lead us to believe that this was a pattern in the way Jesus healed. But this particular story of the blind man and that one I just read from chapter 7, are the only two that Mark records and they have these similarities that the other writers do not record. And so they give us an idea of the way in which Jesus healed.

Chronologically, the miracle that I just read to you about the blind man in Bethsaida is the last miracle in Galilee recorded by Mark. It's the final signature of Jesus. Now you know we're at the end of His ministry chronologically in Galilee, right? Back in verse 13 it says, "Leaving them," He had been on the northwest shore in the main populated area, Jewish dominated area and He left. After a final conflict, His last Galilean conflict with the Pharisees and Sadducees He left. And that's symbolic and He essentially left Galilee and went to the northeast shore, still technically in Galilee but in the town of Bethsaida, you really were in the tetrarchy of Philip Herod, the Idumaeen son of Herod the Great, and he was beholding to Rome. So there was Roman influence. And Bethsaida had been renamed, Bethsaida Julia, because Herod had named the Julia in honor of one of Caesar Augustus' daughters. So he was attached to Rome. There was a certain Roman presence and it was a kind of a fringed town as far as Galilee went. Not far even from Decapolis which was a Gentile area, a little to the east and south.

So He's moving away from Galilee. After this, He goes 25 miles north into another Gentile area called Caesarea Philippi. Does one miracle there but that's not in Galilee. And then circles back through Galilee one more time for the sole purpose of teaching His disciples and has no public ministry and is on His way to the other side of the Jordan and then down the back side of the Jordan through that Gentile territory, headed to Judea for a final few months in the southern part of Israel and then to Jerusalem to die and rise again.

So chronologically this is the last miracle of His Galilean ministry. It bears some weight then because it's the end of all that He had done in Galilee. Geographically, as I said, it's in the town of Bethsaida which though considered to be part of Galilee and certainly Jewish, after all three of the Apostles were from that town, Peter, Andrew and Philip, it really is moving away from the center of Galilee. Now you do know, don't you, that since chapter 7 verse 24 He started a ministry up in to Tyre, Sidon and then down in to Decapolis. He had been moving through Gentile areas. It was really over in Galilee and the geography shows that. It's a sad day for Galilee.

And even in this case where they bring Him this man, and we don't know why He was in Bethsaida, but He was there to teach His disciples. They were with Him when he went there. The public ministry was over. Somebody knew He was there and they brought this man but there will be no more public ministry. And so He takes the man out of the village, isolates him.

Do you remember He said back in verse 12 when they said, "We want a sign from heaven," in verse 11. He said, "Truly no sign will be given this generation, this people, I'm done with signs. I've done enough, you don't need any more." So even the geography is important as He moves to the fringe and from there He's gone.

There's even a literary shift here as well. This miracle really is the beginning of the second act of

Mark's historical drama. Act one is Jesus' public ministry with the people. Act two is Jesus' private ministry with the disciples. Act three is Jesus' passion. Okay? So we are entering in to His private ministry, a final private miracle launches His private time with the disciples, and from there He with them goes to Caesarea Philippi and back down through Galilee with no public ministry. It's time for the training of His disciples.

Some writers have said, "This is such a significant point historically that it could be called The Continental Divide of the gospel of Mark. Everything before this is leading up to it and everything after this falls from it." And the real peak of the Continental Divide is chapter 8 verses 27 to 30, the next passage, the one we'll look at next week where Peter says, "You are the Christ," that is the pinnacle confession. No human being has said that in Mark yet. Demons have said it. Demons have said, "We know You're the Holy One of God." But that confession hasn't come out of the lips of any human being yet. It becomes the pinnacle confession, chapter 8 verses 27 to 30, and that confession indicates the true conversion of the Apostles, their salvation and then their training is launched in seriousness, right on up to the passion of Christ which is the third and final act. So that's the setting in which this little miracle appears. It brings the Galilean ministry to an end and it starts the private ministry of Jesus with His disciples.

Now let's look at the story, that's the setting. Look at the story and it has the feel of an eyewitness account. That should not surprise us. You say, "Well, John Mark wouldn't have been there." No, of course not, he wasn't one of the Apostles, nor one of the early disciples of Jesus, he came later. How does this then become an eyewitness account? Who was John Mark's mentor. John was writing his gospel to Romans in the city of Rome under the influence and as his source of Peter. Peter was his source. So Peter who was from the town of Bethsaida would have been familiar with it, became the source of this to Mark. So it does have eyewitness connections.

Let's go to verse 22. "They came to Bethsaida," which means house of fishing. And that, by the way, was where...near where Jesus fed the five thousand men plus women and children, right? Recorded back in chapter 6 verses 33 to 34, maybe 20 to 25 thousand people, He created fish and bread for them, remember that? That happened near there. Now a miracle of feeding 25 thousand people would be well known to the local town and many of the people in that local town would have been fed in that meal. They are very, very familiar with Jesus, very familiar.

One other thing to note, that place here is called in verse 23 village, the village...the village. But Luke 9:10 refers to it as a city, a *polis*. Was it a village or was it a city? Well the answer is, it became a city. It had always been a village. It became a city because Herod Philip wanted to enhance it, enlarge it, develop it and he did that. He engaged in some development of Bethsaida and that's when he named it after the daughter of Augustus Caesar and it developed into a town, but it had always been a village. And if this is an eyewitness account and Peter is the eyewitness, it probably would have been known to him and his family before him as the village of Bethsaida...a village, its sentimental name, its familiar name, a town its new identity.

It is not far from Capernaum to the east of Capernaum. The miracles that Jesus did at Capernaum spread to Nazareth which was further west than Bethsaida was east. So whatever Jesus was doing, wherever He was doing it, the word was all over everywhere. In fact, the truth of the matter is, Bethsaida had high exposure to Jesus and His miracle power. And so Jesus shows up in town.

You say, "Wouldn't He try to keep quiet?" But remember, this is Peter's home town, this is Andrew's

hometown, this is Philip's hometown and hometown boys would see their family and the word would get out that Jesus is there. And some local people then bring a blind man to Jesus. They know He heals everybody and everything. "And they implored Him to touch him."

Now I just want to comment on this. Jesus healed by touching people and you have to understand that they were untouchable. The religious establish wouldn't...establishment wouldn't touch people like this, cursed people, ceremonially unclean, unsynagogued people. But Jesus just violated that conventional approach and it's really a wonderful thing to see this if you go back to chapter 1 because it characterized all His healing. Simon's mother-in-law was sick with a fever and they spoke to Jesus about it. "So He came to her," verse 31, "He raised her up taking her by the hand." Down in verse 40, "A leper comes to Jesus, falls on his knees and says, 'If You're willing You can make me clean.' Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him and said to him, 'I'm willing, be cleaned.'" You don't touch people, you don't touch lepers for sure. Jesus touched these people.

Chapter 3 verse 10, He healed many with a result that all those who had afflictions pressed around Him in order to touch Him. He became identified as somebody who healed by touch. And people clamored to get close enough to Him for that touch. When a large crowd was gathered around Him by the lake shore, verse 22 of chapter 5, "One of the synagogue officials named Jairus came up and fell at His feet and told Him about his little daughter. And he said, 'She's at the point of death, please come and lay Your hands on her.'" Everybody knew that's how He healed. He put His hands on you. It was about touch...He touches you, you touch Him and in the middle of that crowd while Jairus is hoping Jesus will leave and come, a woman appears who has a hemorrhage for twelve years and she's heard about Jesus in verse 27 and she's convinced that if she can just touch Him, she'll get well...verse 28 says. So she did and she got well.

Chapter 6 verse 5, "He could do no miracle there in His own hometown because of their unbelief except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them." Verse 56 of chapter 6, "Wherever He entered villages or cities or countryside, they were laying the sick in the marketplaces, imploring Him that He might just...that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak and as many as touched it were being cured."

There's something very tender about this, something very compassionate. Jesus doesn't keep His distance. He's not like the leaders of Israel. He touches people. People touch Him. This is the touchable Son of God. There's something tender about that. There's something compassion about that. That's the heart of God. God is not indifferent. God is not transcendently indifferent. God is not detached. I love what it says in Hebrews, that He is touched with the feelings of our infirmities and His being touched in the heart with compassion showed up in the incarnation with a physical touch. That's the personal touch that God wants to render in the life of every person who comes to Him.

He responds. They knew that's how He healed. He responds, verse 23, by 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?'" He did what no self-respecting religious leader would do, took a blind man by the hand. Realizing, of course, that blind people need to be led, He brought him out of the village for isolation and for privacy.

And then He did what He did with the deaf man in chapter 7 and the blind man in John 9, He spit on his eyes and laid His hands on him. Why does He do this? I don't know the answer to that other than

to say this is a symbol of the transfer of the power from Him to the man. The touch, the saliva coming out of His own mouth, touching the man symbolized the transfer of power. It's not a bogus magic concoction, the power is in Christ. The power is in Christ, it flows from Him to the eyes, from Him to the ears so that there can be sight and hearing.

Now this is the one miracle in all the four gospels where Jesus asks the healed person a question. He asked him a question. "Do you see anything?" This is the only two-stage miracle that is to say where Jesus in two touches heals a man. One time He put mud on a man's eyes and the man had to go and wash it off, but it wasn't till he washed it off that he could see. Here the man sees in two stages. This is the only such miracle and it's the only one in which Jesus asks the man to describe what has happened to him. So at the end of verse 23 He says, "Do you see anything?" And he looked up. Now that's a little misleading, "He looked up," because you don't know whether he's healed if you read "he looked up" cause look up kind of means lift your head to us. The actual verb, *anablepsis* means *blepo* is to see, he lifted up to see would be a better way to translate it. He regained his sight. It is the exact same verb used in chapter 10 verses 51 and 52 to describe the healing of blind Bartimaeus, same verb. And in that case it's translated regaining sight.

So what it really is saying is he could see, it's the same verb used in John 9, verses 11, 15 and 18, to describe the man born blind that Jesus healed. It's the word that means he regained his sight. He saw...compound verb. He looked up in the sense that he lifted up his eyes and saw. And he says that, "I see men." In the Greek it says, "I see the men..the men." He knew that Jesus was associated with the men, the Apostles, the disciples who were with Him, who had come across with Him in the boat, who were with Him for this period of training, who would go to Judea with Him and who would become a part of the foundation of the church on the Day of Pentecost, the Apostles...I see the men. Maybe in the conversation going outside the village he found out who the men were...I see the men.

"However, I see them as trees walking around." What is that trying to say? They're out of focus, how about that? Now if you're blind, even if you were born blind, you basically know what a person is like, right? And you know that there's a similarity between a tree and a person. Persons are vertical and so are trees. And his experience indicated to him that he could see the men but they were not distinguishable from the trees.

Which means there was not a clear focus, it was indistinct, imperfect sight. Verse 25, "Then He laid His hands on his eyes again and he looked intently and was restored and began to see everything clearly." Three words are used there, three verbs are used there to describe what happened to this man after the second touch. He touched his eyes again. This is the only place in the four gospels where Jesus did a healing in two touches. And every verb that could be...every compound verb that could be used to describe seeing is used in this passage, about five of them. It's all about sight from every aspect. And the two words for eyes are used. He spit on his eyes, Mark uses one word. The second time He lays His hands on his eyes he uses another word. The first word is *ommata*, the second is *ophthalmos* from which you get ophthalmology. There's a richness here. Every verb and every word for eye is used. And the second touch brings a clinical healing in the most magnanimous way when it says "and he looked intently," that's *diablepo*, literally to see through, penetrating sight, the fog is gone, to look through, to see accurately would be another way to understand it.

And then it says, "Was restored," from *apokathistemi* which means back to perfect vision. I guess 20/20 is perfect, at least that's how we categorize it. So he instantaneously had 20/20 or something

perhaps even more wonderful than that, clearer than that. His eyesight was restored to what it should be by the Creator Himself. So he sees accurately. He sees perfectly.

And then there's another verb. The last one, "He began to see everything clearly." We have seen *anablepo*, *diablepo*, and here's *emblepo*, which means to fix one's eyes. That's just another way to say he could focus his eyes perfectly and see...and the word is clearly and it actually means far away. His near vision was perfect, and his far vision was perfect.

You say, "Why are you belaboring this?" Because I want you to know that every healing Jesus ever did brought the person back to absolute perfection. No partial healings, not like the TV healers. This is perfect vision, penetrating sight, 20/20 vision. He can see near clearly, he can see far off clearly. His perfect vision near and far, the power to focus, the power to concentrate, the power to distinguish. He can see the smallest thing in his hand and he can see clearly the thing that's far away. And this consistent kind of healing, no rehab, no aide, instant, total complete, perfect vision in two steps.

Why the two steps? I don't read anything there that explains, do you? I'll speculate a little later as to why maybe. But for now let's leave it at that.

Verse 26 then says, "He sent him home." He said, "Don't even enter the village, go home." That's the same thing He did with the deaf/mute back in chapter 7 in the Gentile area. But that man didn't obey and the people who were there and saw the miracle didn't obey and they spread it everywhere. But this is very private and we can assume the man did what he was told, He sent him home. Everyone would know soon enough but not until Jesus and His disciples were out of town. Remember now, no more miracles in Galilee. Don't even enter the village.

This instruction is given by our Lord many times. Haven't we seen it many, many times through the gospel of Mark? Don't tell anyone, don't tell anyone, don't tell anyone. And we've talked about the fact that He doesn't want to draw crowds that just come for thrills and miracles. He doesn't want to escalate the conflict with the Pharisees who really become more and more dangerous and threatening the more that He does publicly.

But there's more than that here. Don't go into the village and don't tell anyone. There's something very special for Bethsaida in that. We'll talk about that in a few minutes. But there's also another element to this and I've told you this before as well. Jesus did not want to be known as simply a miracle worker, right? He even told the disciples don't say anything because the message isn't going to be complete until the cross and the resurrection, right? Until the cross and the resurrection, there will continue to be these kinds of prohibitions.

Well, that's the story. Now finally, what is the significance of it? We saw the setting, the story, what is the significance of it? Why does Mark, Mark alone, record this miracle? The last one in Galilee, for what reason?

Well I told you, this is the launch of the second act, the training of the Twelve. It's a private miracle. It's for them. And there are a number of emphases that come together out of this miracle. I'm going to see if I can help you to understand them.

Number one, it is a demonstration of His deity...it is a demonstration of His deity. We know that in the next section, verses 27 to 30, immediately on the heels of this miracle, right after this miracle, comes the testimony of Peter on behalf of the disciples in its fullest account it's given in Matthew, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." They proclaim His deity and His Messiahship. And it's a uniform affirmation of what they have begun to understand when He walked on water and they said, "Truly, He's the Son of God." And now it all comes together. He is the Son of God. He is the promised Messiah. "You're the Christ, the Son of the Living God." That's the great confession that is the peak that establishes the Continental Divide in the gospel of Mark. Nobody has said that yet. That great confession comes here on the heels of this demonstration that He is God by virtue of the power displayed in this miracle. It isn't that they needed another miracle, it simply is that this is the capstone miracle, the final one of all the massive thousands of miracles that evidenced His deity, that led them under the power of God Himself to make this confession. It's a demonstration of His deity, as all miracles were.

Secondly, it's an anticipation of His Kingdom...it's an anticipation of His Kingdom. The disciples were wondering, "What is happening to the Kingdom? Look, where is the power, it's not in our hands?" They wanted to sit on the right hand and the left hand of Jesus in the Kingdom, where was this Kingdom? Where was the power? Where was the authority? Where was the glory? Where was the fulfillment of all the promises to Abraham and to David? Where was the salvation of Israel? The salvation of the nations? What is going on here?

It wasn't coming to pass the way they had been taught to assume it would when Messiah came. But they were nonetheless getting a glimpse of the Kingdom. The psalmist put it this way, looking at the power of God to be displayed in the Kingdom, "The Lord, Psalm 146:8, opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord raises up those who are bowed down. The Lord loves the righteous."

Isaiah prophesied that that kind of sight given to the blind would mark the Kingdom of Messiah when He came and in Isaiah 29:18 he says, "In that day the deaf will hear words of a book and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see." And again Isaiah in chapter 35 describing the Millennial Kingdom talks about the fact, "That there will come a day, verse 5, when the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped and the lame will leap like a deer and the tongue of the mute will shout for joy and waters will break forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert," and on he goes. A highway of holiness, a roadway and it will be called the highway of holiness, it will be for all those who are clean and no fools will wander on that road. This is a...this is a preview of the glory of the Kingdom when physical illnesses and diseases are diminished. And if somebody dies at the age of 100, they die a baby. It's not an Eden world, but it's a preflood world, long life and blessing is coming back. I am the King, here's a preview of Kingdom power. So you have here an affirmation of the Kingdom as well as a demonstration of deity.

Thirdly, you have a confirmation of judgment...you have a confirmation of judgment. Bethsaida is not just any town. They have had high exposure to Jesus. And if you will remember this, in the eleventh chapter of Matthew Jesus in verse 20 began to denounce the cities in which most of His miracles were done. The cities in which most of His miracles were done because they didn't repent, so He denounces them. Here they are.

"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida!" Bethsaida was a town in which most of His miracles were done. Then He says this, what is the curse? "If the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, Bethsaida, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes."



Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you.” And then He pronounces the same judgment on Capernaum, His headquarters for His Galilean ministry. And that is repeated in Luke 10:13, the same thing. Bethsaida, home of three Apostles. Scene of many, many, many miracles, including the feeding of the vast multitude, high exposure to the Lord and His power is cursed. And what is that curse? That at the Great White Throne Judgment in the future when all the ungodly come to the final tribunal and they will, all who have ever lived, all the ungodly will come to the final tribunal of the Great White Throne Judgment and God will judge them and send them to everlasting hell forever, that judgment will be rendered individually to people and to places. Tyre and Sidon, idolatrous, pagan, Gentile, notoriously wicked, a seaport known for crime, vice, prostitution violence, profanity, greed, injustice, doomed by the prophet Jeremiah in chapter 25 and 47 of his prophecy, guilty of selling Jewish slaves, according to Amos chapter 1 verse 9, this was a vile, vile, vile area. Tyre and Sidon were two wicked cities.

On the other hand, there’s Bethsaida...Jewish, proud of its religious heritage, proud of its religious loyalty, a synagogue town, the people who migrated to the temple to worship and sacrifice, and Jesus says, “Hell will be hotter for the inhabitants of Bethsaida than it will be for the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon,” far worse, far worse judgment falls on them.

Our Lord’s leaving Bethsaida, our Lord’s denying the man the right to go back and tell the town what had happened to him is to assure the disciples of the seriousness of this curse. Yes they need to understand grace, they need to understand compassion and the tenderness of Jesus and the touch of Jesus, but His disciples need to understand judgment also. And because Bethsaida did not repent when they had such exposure to Christ, they’ll have a far greater judgment.

What is the point of this miracle? To demonstrate deity, to anticipate the Kingdom, to confirm judgment. There’s a fourth turning point that comes here. Jesus now is leaving this place and this is the...this is the final exit and it hasn’t gone well from the standpoint of the disciples, it hasn’t gone well. And He’s now leaving.

Will it get better? No. The fourth thing I want you to notice is the declaration of death. They know He’s been rejected and they need to know what is coming next. So from here as He goes in the final days in that area, there’s a theme to His teaching. Go down to verse 31 chapter 8, “He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed and after three days rise again.” He began to teach them about His death and resurrection, His rejection, His terrible treatment, His execution and His resurrection.

Chapter 9 verse 31, they’re going through Galilee, that final little private tour, verse 30, didn’t want anybody to know about it. He was teaching His disciples about what? “Telling them that the Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, they will kill Him. When He has been killed, He will rise three days later.”

Chapter 10, verse 32, “They were on the road to Jerusalem by now, Jesus walks ahead of them. They’re amazed. They’re fearful. He took the Twelve aside, began to tell them what was going to happen to Him, saying, ‘Behold, we’re going to Jerusalem, the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests, the scribes, they’ll condemn Him to death and hand Him over to the Gentiles. They’ll mock Him, spit on Him, scourge Him, kill Him. Three days later He will rise again.’” It’s just one lesson after another about His death and resurrection. The shadow of the cross now falls on the little group. Time is running out and Jesus speaks always of His death and resurrection.

This surfaces a problem and that is another issue that has to be seen here and that's the elimination of ignorance. Now the disciples were having a hard time understanding just about everything. Back in chapter 8, remember verses 17 and 18, He's trying to tell them about the heresy and the danger of the heresy, or the leaven of the Pharisees, Sadducees and Herodians, and all they can think about is lunch. And so they're fussing around about where the bread is. And in verse 17 He says, "Don't you see? Don't you understand? Do you have a hardened heart? Having eyes do you not see? Having ears do you not hear? Don't you remember?" This surfaces the fact that they need an awful lot of help. They need the elimination of their ignorance. They've got massive pockets of ignorance.

Yes, You're the Christ, the Son of the Living God, here we are, we've turned our back on the darkness, we've turned our back on Judaism, we're following You. But, boy, beyond that they didn't get much. And, in fact, their ignorance surfaces quickly when Jesus talks about His death. Look at verse 31 of chapter 8 where I just read you, He talks about His being killed.

Verse 32, "He was stating the matter plainly," this is good. You know, the best thing people can ever say to me as a preacher is, "That was clear." Clear is good. Plain is good. It's easy to be hard to understand. You sometimes hear people speak and you say, "Boy, it was over my head."

Look, it's easy to be hard to understand. All it requires is, you don't know what you're talking about. And if you don't know, nobody else is going to know. Okay. It's hard to be clear cause you have to understand it yourself. Jesus was clear. There wasn't anything left out. There was no necessary misunderstanding here. It wasn't on the part of the teacher.

And to show you how hard it was for them to accept this, Peter pulls Him aside and begins to rebuke Him. That's pretty bold. "No, Lord." So they did hear what He said and they refused to accept it. Chapter 9 verse 31 I read, He says it and other times, and He said this on a, I'm sure, on a regular...all these verbs are imperfect tense which means ongoing, repeated. "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, killed and then rising." Verse 32, "They didn't understand the statement but they were afraid to ask Him."

Why were they afraid to ask Him? I'll tell you why, because the last guy that brought it up got in some serious trouble because Jesus said to him, "Get behind Me, Satan." That will shut your class up real fast. I remember when I was in seminary, a guy asked a question of Dr. Charles Fineberg, the first day of class. Fineberg heard the question and said, "If you don't have more intelligent questions than that, don't take up class time." Oh, well, I don't think there was another question all semester. Don't...nobody is going to say anything after Peter just got leveled.

So now they don't even want to deal with it. In chapter 10, which I also read, the same thing, verse 33 He says, "I'm going to be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes and going to put Me to death and hand Me to the Gentiles, and mockery, spit, scourging, killing." Listen to this, "James and John the two sons of Zebedee came up to Jesus saying, 'Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You.'" It's like He didn't say anything. They've gone from getting it, to ignoring it, to shutting it out. Let's talk about where we're going to be in the Kingdom. Forget that stuff.

I mean, that's so human, isn't it? When you don't want to hear it? First you hear it and you don't want to hear it and you ask a stupid question, and that clams you up. And then you wind up not even

hearing it. They need help, don't they? They need the elimination of ignorance. So what's going to happen from chapter 8 verse 27 after the great confession starting in verse 31 is instruction, instruction, instruction but it comes so hard to them. They can understand the part about divorce. They can understand the part about the Kingdom. They can understand a lot of the lessons that Jesus gives. But the one thing they really have trouble with is He's going to die. And they...they don't get that all the way to His death, do they? And on the road to Emmaus, Luke 24:45 to 47, they're walking on the road to Emmaus and they're moaning and groaning because He's dead and He shows up and takes them to the Old Testament and shows them how He had to suffer and die, then rise again. And He reveals Himself to them. So they were unwilling to let the light of the death of Christ and the resurrection of Christ shine into their darkened minds, even until after the events happened, although I am quite certain that it was a topic of Jesus' conversation every day for months and months and months and months and months and months.

Even...Mark even ends his gospel...he ends it the actual gospel of Mark in the original ends in 16:8 and the last thing that you have in 16:8 is the confusion of these men over His death and resurrection. Verse 8 ends this way, "They went out and fled from the tomb, trembling in astonishment, it gripped them, and they said nothing to anyone, they were afraid." That part of it, they just could not come to grips with, His death and His resurrection.

So from now on there's going to be instruction, including His death and resurrection which was the hardest part for them to understand, though there were many other lessons that He taught them. So this miracle then marks a very, very important moment in the chronology of our Lord's life.

One other thing I want to say. I think this miracle serves as an illustration of spiritual sight...an illustration of spiritual sight. This is an irresistible secondary approach to the text, okay? I'm not interpreting it, I'm simply going to use it as an illustration. You've already had the interpretation of the text, but one question lingers in the back of my mind...why this two-stage thing. Why two-stage miracle? Why not touch the man, put the spit on the man and he sees? Why two stages?

Could it be... I can't be dogmatic cause the text doesn't say it...but could it be that this the only time you have a two-stage miracle is right at the crux of the point that the disciples saw some things but didn't see everything clearly? Why is that there and only Mark has it and it's right here?

They believed. They had turned from the darkness and walked into the light. They came out of darkness into light, out of death into life, but their ability to see comes in stages. Does Mark place this here because that's how our spiritual sight comes, in stages? This is an unforgettable miracle, is it also intended to be an unforgettable analogy? Like the man whose sight came in stages? So the disciples' spiritual sight comes in stages gradually more and more? First it's out of focus, and finally and eventually after the cross and after the resurrection it becomes crystal clear and they see it perfectly?

One writer says, "Like the blind men, the disciples who have eyes but fail to see, the disciples have eyes but fail to see and ears but fail to hear." Their ability to see both physically and spiritually, he says, are a gift from God, not of human ability. There's no hint that as his faith grew, his healing progressed. His healing from failed sight to partial sight to complete sight came solely from the repeated touch of Jesus. Isn't that how it happens to us? We start with a little bit of sight, a little more, and a little more till we come to one day full sight. And this is the work of God through our Lord on His...on behalf of His Holy Spirit.

Father, thank You for the illustration of this, but help us to understand wherever we are on the journey from not understanding to misunderstanding to perfect understanding, is a path that You must provide. Your Word is the light. Your Word is the path. Your Word expands our vision, our vision is imperfect and blurred. Like the disciples, certainly it would be imperfect and blurred if we didn't understand the meaning of the cross and the resurrection. No one can see clearly until they've seen perfectly the cross and the resurrection, then everything is clear. Thank You for bringing us to the full understanding of who You are, the full understanding of Your life, Your miracles, Your teaching, and then even more importantly the full understanding of the cross and the resurrection in which we understand everything. And then, Lord, after that a greater understanding comes to us as we embrace more of the glory of Your Word, taking us ever deeper and wider into the realm of light. Thank You for Your Truth even this morning in Christ's name. Amen.

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