

Shaped by Clear Vision

Warren Brosi / General Adult

The Cross Shaped Life / Mark 8:22–26

Warren Brosi

March 8, 2026 (Third Sunday of Lent)

Dominant Thought: Seeing Jesus clearly is a journey.

Objectives:

I want my listeners to understand seeing Jesus clearly takes time.

I want my listeners to feel encouraged to draw closer to Jesus, our King.

I want my listeners to take steps with Jesus this week.

Seeing Jesus clearly is a journey. Some of my first pictures of Jesus I saw from my parents. I remember watching my dad lead singing at a small country church. I remember my mom telling us stories of how God provided for our family when my dad was out of work for over 2 years. I saw how Jesus transformed my dad into an elder at our church in Seneca, MO.

Seeing Jesus clearly is a journey. I also saw the frustration on my dad's face when he'd come home from a leadership meeting at the church, and things weren't always very healthy.

I remember the excitement I felt attending church, serving with our youth group, and building healthy relationships with people of all ages in our church family. As I grew, I gained a clearer picture of Jesus and my role in His Kingdom.

I've walked with Jesus for over three decades. I can honestly say it's been a wonderful journey. I can relate to the disciples in [Mark 8](#) as they walk with Jesus. In [Mark 8](#), we have one of those pictures of the disciples not really understanding Jesus. I find some hope in those 12. If they walked with Jesus for most of three years and still had questions, then maybe there's still hope for the rest of us.

As we walk through the second half of [Mark 8](#), we will encounter three descriptions of the disciples' journey with Jesus.

First, Seeing Jesus clearly is a dangerous journey.

On the boat ride, the disciples forgot to bring bread. They only had one loaf. Then, Jesus cautions them. He gives them a warning, "Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod" ([Mark 8.15](#)).

Jesus gives them a figure of speech connecting with their perceived lack of bread. Leaven or yeast is something small that works through the whole dough. It bubbles, comes to life, and causes the bread to rise. It's small, but powerful. Sometimes, Jesus uses it to describe the kingdom of God in a positive experience ([Matthew 13.33](#)). Other times as in our text, leaven or yeast is a negative image which Jesus gives a triple warning with the words: "caution, watch out, and beware."

We first met the Pharisees, those loyal to Herod, in [Mark 3:6](#), "The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him."

The Pharisees were the religious leaders of the day. They had the religious popular vote. Those loyal to Herod had the political power. Both groups were willing to use violence to build their kingdoms.

Jesus warns His disciples against the religious power of the Pharisees cloaked in oral traditions. People focused more on rules and rituals than relationships. In Matthew's gospel, He connects the yeast of the Pharisees with their teaching ([Matthew 16.12](#)).

Jesus warns against Herod. Herod is the one who beheaded the cousin of Jesus, John the Baptist ([Mark 6.27](#)). Herod married his brother's wife, who happened to be his niece. He was married at the time, and Herodias wanted Herod to send his current wife away. When his current wife heard of the affair, she secretly escaped back to her father. Herod was a ruler in Galilee and Judea where Jesus lived and ministered.

Do you understand why Jesus would say watch out for the leaven of Herod?

Seeing Jesus clearly is a dangerous journey.

Later in [Mark 8.31-38](#), Jesus further describes the danger of following Him. In [Mark 8.31](#), He plainly tells the disciples for the first of three times that He will die on a cross. Then, He gives this invitation in [Mark 8:34](#), “And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”

To see Jesus clearly and follow Him is a dangerous journey. The journey with Jesus is a difficult and dangerous journey.

Second, Seeing Jesus clearly is a confusing journey.

In [Mark 8.17-21](#), Jesus asks them questions as they are still pondering the warnings of the Pharisees and Herod. He asks them a series of questions in [Mark 8:17–18](#), “And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember?”

These questions sound like those of the prophets of the Old Testament.

In [Deuteronomy 29:2–4](#), we read, “And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them: “You have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, the great trials that your eyes saw, the signs, and those great wonders. But to this day the Lord has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear.”

Several hundred years later, Jeremiah warns in [Jeremiah 5:21](#), “Hear this, O foolish and senseless people, who have eyes, but see not, who have ears, but hear not.”

The people in the Old Testament were quite similar to the disciples, and to us. There are times when we just don't get it. Sometimes our hearts are hard. Sometimes our minds are on things that are not important. We are distracted and confused.

Jesus reminds them of His abundant provisions. He's the one who can provide basketfuls of provisions. They recount the leftovers from the miraculous feedings. And yet, they still don't quite understand what Jesus is saying.

Later in [Mark 8.32-33](#), Peter rebukes Jesus after Jesus predicts his trip to Jerusalem and the cross. Peter rebukes Jesus. Jesus replies in [Mark 8:33](#), “But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, ‘Get behind me,

Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”

To aid us in our confusion, we need to remember the goodness of God. We need to remember how Jesus provides for our needs. In confusing times, come back to the simple truth that Jesus cares for us which leads us to the third description of our journey with Jesus.

Third, Seeing Jesus clearly is a healing journey.

After Jesus and the disciples leave the boat, they enter Bethsaida and people bring a blind man to Jesus. They beg Jesus to touch the blind man. Jesus takes the blind man by the hand outside of the village. Then, Jesus spits on the man's eyes. This appears to be quite strange. Do you think the blind man heard Jesus spit? Did he feel it? It's strange. Jesus lays his hands on the man. Then Jesus asks, "Do you see anything?" The man replies, "I see people, but they look like trees, walking."

People have gone to great lengths to explain what is happening. This miracle story is unique to Mark. No other gospel writer shares this story. It seems like Jesus is having an off day. What's wrong with Jesus? Power shortage? Maybe Jesus is healing this man in two stages to illustrate the growth of the disciples. Much like they have a hard time seeing Jesus clearly, so this man has hard time seeing Jesus and people clearly.

"The blind man sees stick men; the disciples only recognize their cultural stick-figure Messiah" (John York, "Only the Blind Can See," in *Preaching Mark's Unsettling Messiah*, edited by David Fler and Dave Bland, p. 148).

Jesus laid His hands on the man's eyes again. Mark says, "And he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly" ([Mark 8.25](#)).

One of the pictures of Jesus as the anointed one, the Christ, the King, is found in [Isaiah 61:1-3](#), "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to grant to those who mourn in Zion— to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified."

Seeing Jesus clearly is a journey.

It takes time to see Jesus clearly. It takes time with Jesus to understand His heart, His values, His mission.

John Newton (1725-1807), was born about 300 years ago. He was nurtured by a Christian mother who taught him the Bible at an early age. However, after his mother died of tuberculosis, he found a pattern of “unsettled behavior and impatience of restraint.” He rebelled against the discipline of the Royal Navy and deserted. He was caught, put in irons, and flogged. Later he wrote, “I sinned with a high hand and I made it my study to tempt and seduce others.” He took up employment with a slave-trader and would captain a number of slave ships. On one sea voyage, during an enormous storm, he was reading Thomas a Kempis’s *The Imitation of Christ*. He converted to Christianity during the storm, but later admitted, “I cannot consider myself to have been a believer, in the full sense of the word.”

Later, on New Year’s Day 1773, John Newton wrote down the words to a song to accompany a sermon from [1 Chronicles 17.16-17](#). Reflecting on the question from King David, “Who am I, LORD God, and what is my family that you have brought me this far?...You, LORD God, have looked on me as though I were the most exalted of men” ([1 Chronicles 17.16-17](#)). The words of that song to accompany that sermon were later called, “Amazing Grace.” In that song, we sing, “I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see.”

(Sources, “John Newton” in *131 Christians Everyone Should Know*, by Mark Galli and Ted Olson. <https://www.museumofthebible.org/exhibits/amazing-grace-online-exhibit>).

Immediately following this healing story, Jesus asks the disciples a question, “Who do people say that I am?” ([Mark 8.27](#)). They answer, “John the Baptist, Elijah or one of the prophets?” Then, Jesus asked them, “Who do you say I am? Peter answered, “You are the Christ” ([Mark 8.29](#)). This verse is the second time we’ve seen Jesus addressed as “Christ” or “Messiah.” The first time is found in the opening verse of this gospel. [Mark 1:1](#), “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”

Jesus is a King. He’s a healing King. One who restores not by force, but with compassion and sacrifice.

Seeing Jesus clearly is a journey. Do you see Him clearer today than yesterday, last week, last month, last year?

Who do you see when you see Jesus? “The New Testament is bothersome because it calls upon every woman and every man within hearing distance to decide on their own about the true answer” (Thomas C. Oden, *Classic Christianity*, p. 215).

How do you answer the question, “Who is Jesus?” Is He your King and Savior?

Following Jesus is dangerous. Pay attention to the warnings He gives and stay on His good path.

Following Jesus is confusing. Remind yourself of His faithful care. Remember your church family is here to walk with you and help you understand His truth.

Following Jesus is healing. He restores us and makes us whole. He’s the one who rules forever and ever.

“Do you see anything?”