

Blurry Vision



Mark 8:22-30

I hope you're enjoying this walk through Mark's gospel. I'm enjoying every day studying, but also the opportunities I get to just bring to you what Mark seems to be teaching us about Jesus Christ. It's been an amazing study. If you were here last week, we shared with you that this Sunday will bring the conclusion of the first half of the gospel of Mark. I know not everybody agrees with me that when we get to verse 30, it's going to be halftime, but in my opinion, when we come back next week, we're going to start the second half. If you're a basketball fan, you know many times when your team is down at the end of the first half, the analysts and coaches always say those first three minutes in the second half are most important. You don't want to miss next week. It's going to be amazing what's going to happen as we begin the second half of the gospel according to Mark, but we're in the last two minutes of the first half this morning. If you're like me, you've been taught that there's a shot that gets in right before the buzzer, so we're going to look at that this morning because they may not be what really happens at the conclusion of the first half. We're going to read Mark 8:22-30.

Scripture

"And they came to Bethsaida. And some people brought to him a blind man and begged him to touch him. (If you've been studying Mark with us, you know this is a common thing. Jesus shows up at a new

place, people hear He is there and they bring people to touch Him. Here we go again, but let's not put it in autopilot because this is not going to be what you're thinking if you haven't read this.) ***And he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village, and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, "Do you see anything?" And he looked up and said, "I see people, but they look like trees, walking." Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. And he sent him to his home, saying, "Do not even enter the village. And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets." And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ." And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him."***

(Prayer)

Father, open our eyes to the truth and the beauty of this gospel. I know we say it every week that we stand before this congregation, but I hope we never see the gospel the same. For all of us who were raised to believe the gospel is just an historical narrative or diary, just recording facts about Jesus. We missed it. Oh how I would have loved to have been a literature teacher, even though I didn't like literature in school because the literary beauty of this book is amazing. The creative artistry of this guy named Mark, and how he carefully chronicled the life of Christ with a purpose to a Gentile church who was struggling to live out the Christian life, yet we see ourselves in many ways just like that church. So many of us here are struggling and life hasn't gone exactly how we thought it was going to go when we signed up for this thing called Christianity. We were led to believe you were just a divine Santa Claus and every day would be Christmas. It just hasn't worked out that way. Father, we come before You, humbly, because we know this gospel was penned not just for a church living in the Roman Empire; we believe this was penned for us here at Hardin. Father, we believe You are going to take this word and let us see the truth and it

will truly change our lives. Father, we ask You this every week and we really mean it because you and I made an agreement a long time ago that I would never get in front of Your people without Your anointing, and I pray for Your anointing because if it's not going to come, I just need to sit down. Father, as a congregation, we don't want to be hearers only but doers of the Word. We understand that before we can be doers of the Word we've got to hear the Word, so we're going You to anoint us to hear just as You are going to anoint the speaker to speak. As we get sent out this morning, we want to flesh this thing out; we want to life this thing out. We want it to govern our speech, our text, our Facebook entries, every conversation, and every action. We want to life this thing out called the Christian life. Thank You for the privilege and it's in Your precious Son's name we pray, amen.

If you're like me, you were raised hearing some of these phrases. "If you don't succeed at first, try, try again." "The third time is the charm." "Experience is the best teacher." "If it can go wrong, it will go wrong." Now, we expect those kind of phrases to be in our world because we live in a fallen world and most of us believe we are fallen creatures, so we expect to do something and sometimes know we've got to redo what we did because when we did it the first time, we didn't do it right. Sometimes we attempt things knowing we don't really know what we're going to do, but we're going to do it anyway because we're going to know after we do it, then we're going to know how to do it right the next time. Would you ever expect those kind of things with Jesus? I mean, He lived in a fallen world, but He wasn't a fallen person. If I can use the language of the US Open, up until this point in this story, Jesus has lived His life 'bogey free,' so to speak, until this morning. It's Jesus first bogey. It's His first failure. I've got to be honest with you, so many of us have been so programmed about Christ that we don't even notice it. This story is so alarming, that when Mark included it in his gospel message, and Matthew and Luke wrote their corresponding gospels using Mark's gospel as the outline they omitted it. Go to Matthew 16 and see. Matthew goes straight from the feeding of the four thousand, then getting in the boat; the disciples not understanding the feeding of the four thousand, and you go straight to Caesarea Philippi; you

don't have Jesus stopped in Bethsaida. Why? Because a lot of people don't understand what happened here. Jesus just had this ability to show up when He showed up, a crowd always gathered around, there was always somebody in the crowd who had a need, and they were always stepping out bringing that need to Jesus, asking Him to touch, either themselves, or to touch their friend. We've seen this throughout the gospel of Mark. Jesus shows up in the crowd, there are some friends who have a friend who is blind. This blind man cannot get to Jesus on his own, so he needs some friends. The friends bring the blind man to Jesus and they beg Jesus. Hear what Mark says. They don't just politely ask; they beg Him, 'will You just touch him.' It's been clear from the gospel of Mark now that everyone believes if we can just touch Him, just touch what He's wearing we can be healed. Mark has been careful to slow down to let us know that Jesus teaches us that it's not just touching Him that brings healing; it's faith that brings healing.

So now, a man has been brought to Jesus and he's blind. Jesus does this a little different. He's done it earlier, but instead of doing a work in front of the crowd of people, instead of doing a miracle, Jesus takes this man by the hand. Have you ever had the privilege of leading someone who is blind? I'm telling you; when you lead someone who is blind, you walk differently than you normally would walk because you realize they don't see what you see. You want to make sure you don't lead them falsely. Get this picture. Jesus has this blind man by the hand, and the Bible says He takes him out of the village. Here's the picture I have. I could be wrong, but I have the picture that when Jesus starts to lead this man out of the village, everyone in the village stays in the village, but the friends follow, and I believe the disciples follow. Now, Kory introduced this a couple of weeks ago where the man was deaf and Jesus took His hand and put it in his ears and then He spit. We assume He spit on His finger and touched the man's tongue...yuck! Now Jesus has this man outside the village and He spits again, except this time He doesn't spit on His hand; He spits in the eyes of this man. Yeah. But he didn't see it coming because he's blind. He's now got spit in his eyes, and Jesus touches his eyes. For the first time, Jesus does not say your faith has healed you. Jesus does not say open your eyes you can see. Jesus didn't turn to the friends and say your faith has healed this man. The first time in the Word of God, Jesus turns to the

man and says, 'Can you see?' I'm sorry...if I had attempted something like this I would expect to ask how it went. "Did it work?" But I don't expect Jesus to do that, but He does! Does anybody believe maybe Jesus has done so much, He has felt the power oozing out of Him, so when the power came out of Him to heal this man, He was a little worried if there was enough left in Him to do the job? Jesus says, 'Did it work? Can you see?' 'I see people walking like trees.' Tell me you see this. For the first time in Jesus' ministry, what He attempted to do He didn't do right. So He steps back, He doesn't spit, but He takes His hand and touches the man's eyes again, and when He takes them off this time, the man is healed. His eyesight is restored and he sees clearly. Praise the Lord for if you don't succeed at first, try, try again!

Please tell me you understand why Matthew and Luke wouldn't record this story. So why does Mark record it? Why does Mark put it where he puts it? Why did Jesus actually heal a man in two parts, two steps, instead of instantaneously, as He had up unto this point? I think these are worthy questions to explore. Can we back up just a little bit? Does anybody remember any of those questions Jesus was asking in the boat? Do you remember Him saying, do you have eyes that can't see? Do you have ears that don't hear? Right before the feeding of the four thousand, Jesus just opened the ears of a deaf man by spitting and then touching his tongue, and now Jesus just heals a man who can't see by spitting, but He does it in a twofold process. This is a real story about Jesus healing a man, but He didn't just heal the man for the sake of the man; He healed the man for the sake of the disciples. In other words, Jesus did what He did for the sake of the disciples. Here's what you need to see. Just like the man who was blind and couldn't see, there were twelve people following Jesus and they had the same vision this man had; it was blurry. Did you catch that? The first vision the man had, men looked like trees. That's what he said. I happen to believe, just my personal opinion in my sanctified imagination that this man wasn't born blind because if he had, how would he know what a tree looked like? How would he know what a man looked like?

I did a little research, did you realize in that day, and even today in the Middle Eastern part of the world in a lot of port countries, there are people who are born with natural sight they lose their sight because of hygiene

and because of where they live in relationship to the sun? I called Dr. Jarvis, and he told me the number one reason for blindness in the world today was cataracts. A simple surgery that so many of us have cannot be performed in many places in the world because of extreme poverty; therefore, people actually lose their sight. Here's a man who possibly saw, now can't see, is brought to Jesus, and when Jesus touches him, at first he has blurry vision. Why is Mark recording this story? Because ever since the disciples have been following Jesus, they don't see Him clearly. They have blurry vision. If I take my glasses off and look out at you, you still look like people but you're not quite as sharp as you were when I had them on. When you go to the eye doctor, have you ever wondered why they have that big E at the top of the chart? I've always thought you would have to be blind not to see that big E! Well, that's true. If you can't see that big E on the eye chart at twenty feet with the corrective measures they use, you are legally blind. Do you know what that big E at the top of the chart actually means? It means you've got 20/200 vision. That 20/20 thing got started by a man named Herman Snellen in the 1800's. It's called the Snellen fractions: 20/20, 20/40, 20/60, 20/80. So when you stand, you're supposed to be able to read a certain line on that chart and you know it's down toward the bottom. When you read that certain line near the bottom of the chart, it means you have 20/20 vision. You may have to have a corrective measure to have that, but have you ever noticed those two lines below that 20/20 line? I always wanted to be able to read that one. I don't want to settle for 20/20; I've never wanted to be standard, never wanted to be normal. I want to go to 20/15. I want to get to that bottom at 20/10! That means you've got really sharp clear vision. What it means if you are 20/200 and have with 20/20 vision is you could see that E at 200 feet, but that guy would have to be 20 feet in front of it to see it.

The disciples have been walking with Jesus, but just like that man, they don't see clearly, so I titled this message, blurry vision. Just to practice this morning, I had my iPad open to the Word of God, I took my glasses off, and I couldn't read it! So I enlarged the screen with my fingers and it started getting bigger. I finally got it big enough that I could see it without my glasses, and I was praising myself! Then I had a problem. All the words in the sentence weren't on the page, so I had to swipe left three times to get all the words in that sentence on the page. Why? Because that's how

blurry my vision really is. We've got one minute in the first half, and God wants His disciples to know they have blurry vision. This man though, physically, can clearly see. But the disciples can't clearly see who Jesus is, so He takes them to Caesarea Philippi. You've got to realize that at Caesarea Philippi there was a pagan altar to every known god in the world, just about. Against that backdrop of paganism, Mark says, 'on the way.' Remember, the first half, there were two main phrases, 'in the house,' and 'in the boat,' because we're around the Sea of Galilee, we crisscrossed that sea, a lot of things happened on both the Jewish and Gentile sides. But all of a sudden now, those phrases 'in the house' and 'in the boat' is going to be replaced by Mark by this phrase we will see often, over and over, 'on the way.' Now we're on the way to Caesarea Philippi, but that's going to be a short stop. When we get to Caesarea Philippi, the next time we see the phrase 'on the way,' we're going to Jerusalem. Around the Sea of Galilee, if you encountered the ministry of Jesus Christ and came to believe He was the Messiah, you knew who He was but you didn't see Him clearly. It's only going to be when you get to Jerusalem that you can see who Jesus really is. So on the way to Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked that famous question, 'Who do people say I am?' If you remember, people started speculating about Jesus when He sent out the disciples and they went out with authority and began to preach and cast out demons. All of a sudden, Herod heard about the preaching ministry of Jesus and he believed Jesus was John the Baptist come back alive. Other people said He was Elijah, others said He was one of the prophets, and others said He is *the* prophet. So now, when Jesus says who do people say I am, they just quote, 'some say you're John, some say you're Elijah, some say you're one of the prophets. Jesus didn't stop there. He said, 'But who do you say I am?' Can I just pause here for just a moment and remind us of an important truth? It's really not important what other people are saying about Jesus. What's important is what you say about Jesus. Jesus asked the twelve, 'Who do you say I am?' Without a blink, some of my commentaries say they believe there was a silence, a pause, and finally Peter spoke up. Peter was Baptist, amen, impulsive, always speaking. This time he got it right; he said, 'I know who You are. You are the Christ, the Messiah. You are God's anointed!'

Then watch this. The ESV says, "Then He strictly charged them not to tell anyone who He was." I'm not a translator of Scripture, but I know just enough Greek to be dangerous. Here's what I know. This phrase, then He strictly charged, is one word, *Epitimaó*. It's the word that's been translated earlier by the ESV as 'He rebuked.' Remember I told you it means to rap across the knuckles. Please see this. When the Bible says, Jesus strictly charged them to tell no one that He was the Messiah, He didn't say, 'now boys, don't tell anybody.' He rapped them across the knuckles and said don't you say a word! Come on; let's be honest. There have been times when you've been asked to do things, and times when we've been told to do things, and you understood the urgency of what somebody is telling you by the way they told you. It was almost as if like if you told them they were going to kill you. If you told something, you were going to be in big, big trouble. That's the word here. I've got to ask this question. Why would Jesus ask somebody who He was, them get the answer right, and then, Him tell them not to tell anybody? It is because their salvation and our salvation, in many ways, is just like the healing of the blind man. We don't instantly get glorified; we instantly get justified, instantly get made right with God. But even being made right with God at the moment of salvation, we still don't see Him clearly. The rest of our lives will be about seeing Him clearly. What we're going to see is from the rest of this book, we're going to go to Jerusalem, because it's only at Jerusalem you can really see who Jesus is. This group of twelve who don't clearly see who He is, after the death, after the burial, after the resurrection, after the ascension, after the anointing of the Holy Spirit from on high, they see Him clearly and they go out to the whole world proclaiming who He is. But in the second half of the book of Mark, they don't see Him clear enough to even tell who He is.

See, when Matthew records this in chapter 16, Matthew says Peter said you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Mark doesn't have him saying Son of the Living God. Either Peter said it and Mark didn't add it, and Matthew did. Or, Peter really didn't say it and Matthew added those words to Peter. All Mark has him saying is You are the Christ. Because Matthew records, You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God, Matthew records Jesus saying, high five Peter! "Blessed are you, Simon Bar Jonah, flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven." So what Matthew is trying to tell us is if we are a person like Peter who

knows who Jesus is, we can't take any physical credit, there's nothing in our flesh that would bring us to that conclusion, there's nothing in our physical DNA that would lead us to believe who Jesus Christ is. It takes a special revelation of God. It takes God in heaven opening the eyes of a blind person who's dead in sin, separated from God, to see who Jesus is. Even though at first the vision may be blurry, it takes God stepping into a person's life. Just as that blind man couldn't cure himself, you and I can't cure ourselves.

But Mark doesn't give a high five to Peter. Why? If you've had Peter shooting this shot and the buzzer sounds, guess what; it's too late. It doesn't count. It doesn't count because Peter really doesn't know what kind of Messiah Jesus is. In the second half of the book, here's what's going to happen. We're going to learn what kind of Messiah He is. Once we learn what kind of Messiah He is, we're going to see clearly what a follower of Him looks like. This means if you and I are sitting here this morning and we're in that stage of salvation where we don't see Jesus clearly, we don't see ourselves clearly. It's possible we're not who we think we are because, ultimately, we don't really know who Jesus is.

If you watch basketball, you saw during the NCAA tournament that when it wasn't going really good for the team in the first half, the analyst would say the first three minutes of the second half are the most important. That's why next week as we finish out chapter 8, it's so important for you to see who Jesus is. God took His disciples on a corrective tour to change their vision of Him, and God has you and me on that same course. He wants us to see who Jesus is, so that by ultimately knowing who Jesus is, we know who we are. Just as Jesus knew God's purpose for Him, we come to understand God's purpose for us. Not to take anything away from the second half, but we're going into half time. Let's have this thought. Tell me who Jesus was about. He's about His Father. Do any of you have the audacity to say Jesus was about Himself? No, you can't bring up one instance in the life of Jesus where He's about Himself. Then why are you about you? The Apostle Paul said in Romans that we are reconciled through His death that we might be saved by His life. The second half of the gospel of Mark is going to make it plain that if we're really following Christ, we've got to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him.

Why is everything about us? Why is everything about me? Why is everything about you? Why is everything in your life about you? I think it's possible that you and I are still in the stage where we've been touched, but our vision is blurry. If our vision is blurry about Him, it will be blurry about us. What we desire is in this thing called sanctification, for God to so touch us that we see 20/20 vision. We see Him clearly. When we see Him clearly, it changes our speech, our actions, our texts, our Facebook, our emails, what we watch, what we do, how we act interact with people, how we respond to people; it changes everything! Mark is written to a church to where he exposes the disciples to expose them, not how life shouldn't be lived, but how live should be lived. That's the life we want to live. I can choose, it wouldn't be smart, to live the rest of my life like I just preached the last half of this message without my corrective lenses. But for your sake, you better hope I wear these.

Let me close with this thought. For God's sake and our family's sake and our neighbor's life, let's wear the corrective lens of Jesus Christ. He didn't just die to make His death available. He died to make His life available. He wants to live His life in us. What a Father!