

## Do You See Anything?

I've done some amazingly stupid things in my life. One of the stupidest was the morning I was driving home from work after working at UPS most of the night. The fog in the Missouri River bottom that particular morning was so thick, even with my car lights on I could only see a few feet in front '84 Mazda GLC.

So what did I decide to do—wait another hour until the fog thinned out? No—that would've made sense. Or how about creep along at 3 mph hugging the yellow line, until I made it home? No—still too reasonable. I decided since the speed limit was 55 across the Broadway extension, through the river bottom area, I would slow down to a reasonable 40 mph.

I was exhausted, I wanted to get home to get to changed and get to class at the seminary, and maybe I was thinking what a great challenge it would be to drive not being able to see where I was going! Maybe I just wasn't thinking. Somehow by God's grace I didn't kill myself or someone else driving home that morning.

Would you all agree that sight is a pretty important function? Even more important than physical sight is spiritual sight.

The Bible says that without Christ, even though everyone is walking around as if they know where they are going, without Christ people are spiritually blind. Second Corinthians 4:4 (NASB) says, **"The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."**

When Jesus saves a person He gives them spiritual sight. The ability to see reality, to no longer be blind, wandering aimlessly, groping in the dark—but now seeing life through an accurate and clear lens. But sometimes even as Christians our spiritual eyes do not see quite clearly, In Ephesians 1:18 Paul prays for spiritual sight for believers writing, **"I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened."** These verses raise two crucial questions from the start. Have you been born again so you are no longer spiritually blind? And as a Christian, are you seeing Christ clearly?

Today as we return to our study of Mark, our Lord heals a blind man and gives Him sight. This miracle only appears here in Mark 8 and is unusual, in that the miracle occurs in two stages—which is really unique in Mark, since Mark is the writer who describes everything with immediacy. So open your Bibles to Mark 8:22-26, and follow along as I read.

**22 Then He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him.**

**23 So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town. And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything.**

**24 And he looked up and said, "I see men like trees, walking."**

**25 Then He put His hands on his eyes again and made him look up. And he was restored and saw everyone clearly.**

**26 Then He sent him away to his house, saying, "Neither go into the town, nor tell anyone in the town."**

This is the only miracle that was done in stages as well as the only one where the person healed was asked if he had been cured. Why did Jesus do it like that?

Like we said last week, Jesus always does things on purpose. He has a reason for doing this healing this way. Jesus never did "random" miracles or simply performed miracles for no reason at all. So there must be some purpose in the two-stage healing of this blind man. Mark merely relates the story. He doesn't explain the meaning behind it. And that brings us back to the question, "What's going on here?" In order to get down to the root of the matter, let's ask a few questions.

### **I. Why did he heal this man in stages?**

A Caring Request Verse 22

A Compassionate Savior Verse 23

A Clearing Process Verses 23c to 25

A Commissioned Conclusion Verse 26

The answer, I believe is that Jesus does this miracle not only to make blind man see, but to give the disciples a spiritual eyewash—they're having a hard time seeing Christ accurately, clearly, fully. And the Lord uses this healing as a message to His men. The Lord is telling His men, "You are just like this blind man—you're seeing Me partially, incompletely, unclearly. You're not getting it. You are driving in a fog.

Some of you might be thinking, "preacher, how did you arrive at that conclusion? You just said Mark doesn't spell out for us the reason why Jesus did it that way." Here is a good principle for Bible study: If the text itself isn't clear, go to the context. That is, find out what comes before and after and see if that helps you out.

### **II. What do we learn from the immediate context?**

The background to this story is important. Jesus has just fed the 4000. When they leave by boat across the lake again, Jesus warns the disciples against the "yeast" of the Pharisees but the disciples don't understand what Jesus is saying. Jesus asks them about the feeding of the 5000 and 4000 and asks, "**Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Is your heart still hardened? Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember? ... How is it you do not understand?**" (Mark 8:17-18, 21). The issue seems to be about clarity, about understanding. The disciples saw in part, but they had not yet grasped the full truth. You can't separate this miracle from its context because the miracle is like a parable of the disciples' spiritual confusion. It is possible to have eyes and yet not see very clearly.

I learned that lesson about my eyes during my sophomore year at the Air Force Academy. When I entered the Academy my eyesight was 20/20. Like most of my classmates I planned to be a pilot, preferably a fighter pilot. I remember one day walking back to my dorm from class looking at the F-104, one the planes on

static display on the other side of the terrazzo. And I could not read the tail numbers. I thought, that's strange. I also noticed that I could not read the nameplates on the doors in the hallway unless I got closer than I used to.

After an eye test I found my perfect eyesight was now not so perfect. I could see, but not clearly. When the eye doctor gave me glasses I was amazed at what I had been missing! It is possible to have eyes but not see very clearly.

Look at what immediately follows this miracle in Mark 8:27, **"Now Jesus and His disciples went out to the towns of Caesarea Philippi; and on the road He asked His disciples, saying to them, 'Who do men say that I am?' So they answered, 'John the Baptist; but some say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets. He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter answered and said to Him, 'You are the Christ.'"** Peter says He's the Christ, but then misunderstands Christ's mission—Christ says, "Get behind me, Satan." Right after this healing the disciples see but they are not seeing accurately.

### **III. What is Jesus teaching us in this story?**

**our own spiritual perception is often clouded and imperfect.**

Having been partially healed, the once-blind man can see, but now he needs glasses! Where once he walked in darkness, now he sees the light, but his eyesight is still dim and unfocused. He has something like 20/500 vision. *He's what you might call legally blind but not literally blind.* He definitely shouldn't be driving a car without wearing his Coke-bottle glasses, with or without a pretty girl by his side. He had been healed, but his healing was not yet complete. He was "on the way" but he wasn't finished yet. Is that not a picture of all of the followers of Jesus? We all have blind spots, places of weakness, areas of life where we see with blurry vision, parts of life where our sanctification is far from complete. Who among us would say, "I have arrived. I am truly like Jesus in every part of my life."

It was true then and it is true now that spiritual growth is *growth*. It is not instant development. That's bad news for a generation of impatient believers. We are like the man who prayed, "Lord, give me patience and give it to me right now!" We want quick answers, five steps, six keys, seven promises, and eight principles that will lead us to the "victorious Christian life." *But God rarely works like that.* We are born as little children, babes in Christ, who must go through all the stages of life, learning and growing as we go along. And how do we learn to walk? By trying and falling, trying and falling, and then trying and falling some more.