

Sunday, June 26, 2016
Pastor Ben Cuthbert

Introduction to Mark 8:22-26

God helps those who are unable to help themselves. Jesus demonstrates this once again in the way He goes about healing the blind man in this passage. It may seem strange at first glance that Jesus healed this man in two stages, but if anything, that should point us to the fact that both physical and spiritual sight are given entirely by the grace of God in His own perfect timing.

Once again, Jesus reveals Himself to have authority over creation, but He chooses to reveal Himself in a way that demonstrates His personal, patient care, as well as His prerogative to do with it (and us) what He pleases and when He pleases to do it (Ps. 115:3).

Context

In the stories immediately preceding Mark 8:22-26, Jesus fed four thousand people, was questioned by the Pharisees, and chastised His disciples for their lack of understanding. While disciplining His disciples, Jesus uses the image of blindness to describe their lack of faith (8:17-18).

In Mark 4:12, Jesus (quoting Isaiah 6:9-10) said that many people would “see” but not perceive and “hear” but not understand. Throughout Mark’s Gospel, Jesus has taught and performed many miracles, and yet those who witness the miracles and hear the teaching have difficulty fully understanding who Jesus is and why He came. This miracle, however, will set up a breakthrough in the disciples understanding of, and relationship to, Jesus.

Structure

- I. Villagers bring the blind man to Jesus (22)
- II. Jesus heals the blind man (23-25)
- III. Jesus prohibits the man who now sees from returning (26)

Read and Reflect *(Use this section to write down any thoughts you had on the sermon. Make sure to note any questions you had about something in the passage or in the sermon.)*

Read Mark 8:22-26

I. Jesus Is Intensely Personal

II. Jesus Is Patiently Persistent

III. Jesus Heals Perfectly

Discuss

1. Pastor Ben began the sermon by quoting Mark 7:37, “He (Jesus) has done everything well.” Have you or someone you’ve known ever doubted that? What caused those doubts?
2. Jesus is intensely personal. He loves you. Our children sing “Jesus loves me” frequently. But how do you experience that love in a day-to-day sort of way? How can you grow in your confidence in that glorious truth?
3. Where would you place yourself on the “spiritual sight spectrum”? Remember, we cannot now see Him perfectly (1 Corinthians 13:12), but at this stage in your spiritual life, how easy or difficult is it for you to see Jesus and His purposes clearly?
4. Read Isaiah 35 as a group. Describe in your own words the hope that Isaiah wrote about in that passage. Is that hope real to you?
5. We will never know Jesus exhaustively, but when you do see Him clearly, when He returns (1 John 3:2), what would you like to ask Him to get to know Him better?

Go Deeper *(This section is especially for leaders to consider as they prepare for the Growth Group meeting)*

Gospel Connections: Jesus did something no one expected in healing the blind man in two stages. Likewise, Jesus' coming happened/will happen in two stages. In the first stage, He secured our salvation through His death and resurrection. Because of that work, we can now "see" Him by faith and be saved. However, right now we can only see dimly, but when He comes again (the second time) we will see Him face to face (1 Cor. 13:12; 1 John 3:2).

Whole Bible Connections: Isaiah 35 is the most pertinent Old Testament passage relating to this story: the God of Israel has returned in the person of Jesus and has inaugurated the end times in which God is restoring creation. However, the most important biblical-theological connections are in the passage immediately following this one. In Mark 8:27-9:1, Jesus is going to ask the disciples who they think He is. Peter will confidently and correctly affirm that Jesus is the Messiah. Once Jesus elaborates on what that means, however, it will become clear that Peter only saw "dimly" or "in part" and it would take much more time for the disciples to realize that Jesus was a Messiah who would have to suffer and die and be raised again from the dead. This smaller section in Mark's Gospel comes to an end with another healing of a blind man named Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52).

Theological Connections: Pelagius, a fourth/fifth-century heretic, argued that because God has given us a will, we can choose to do good, and that is all we need to be saved. The illustration he used was that God gave us "eyes to see" but that we had the power to choose whether to use them for good or evil. Augustine, a fourth/fifth-century hero, countered by saying that God has given us a will, but because of sin it has been corrupted. To use the same illustration: we have eyes, but they are blind. In other words, in the same way God has the prerogative of creating what He chooses, He has the prerogative to redeem what and how He chooses. Once Jesus "opens our eyes" by causing us to be born again, He is also free to direct the path our lives take (as in Mark 8:26).