

## The Gospel According to Mark

### The Opening of Blind Eyes

Mark 8:22-26

Sunday, November 8, 2020

#### Introduction

The Bible often uses the imagery of blindness to describe our spiritual state before salvation. In one of His rebukes of the Pharisees Jesus describes them as blind. And when He questions His disciples' true understanding of who He is He asks: *having eyes do you not see?*

In Mark 8:22-26 Jesus performs an incredible miracle – restoring the physical sight of a blind man. On its own the miracle reveals the power of Jesus and His compassion toward those in need. But the context of the healing and the way Mark shares the miracle makes it clear that Jesus also intended for this miracle to serve as an illustration, first for His disciples and us by extension, of the importance of having our eyes fully opened. We are all born spiritually blind and Jesus is the only One who can open blind eyes.

#### Considering the Context

In the previous passage Jesus both warned and rebuked His disciples for their dullness of faith. First, Jesus warned them against being deceived by the unbelief of the Pharisees. Then, when it was clear that they didn't understand His warning, He rebuked them for their lack of understanding.

It's on the heels of this warning and rebuke that Jesus heals a blind man illustrating that He is the One who gives sight. The unique means in which Jesus heals shows that while the disciples may have already seen in part, they were still in need of full sight.

#### A blind man is brought to Jesus (8:22)

As Jesus and His disciples arrive in Bethsaida (on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee) a blind man is brought to Jesus to be healed. Here we see a man with a condition that he cannot change, but who is brought to Jesus by those who believe that He has the power to help.

In a similar way, none of us has the ability to open the spiritually blind eyes of another person. But as we are faithful to introduce people to Jesus through the message of the Gospel God can give them sight.

#### The touch of Jesus (8:23)

While there are many times when Jesus simply heals with a word or a touch, in this case there is more involved. In a very similar way to the healing of the deaf and mute man (7:32-33), Jesus takes the man aside, anoints him with spit and lays hands on Him. While we don't know the full significance of these actions for certain, they do seem to show the compassion of Jesus as he deals with these men in such careful and purposeful ways.

#### A partial healing (8:23-24)

In most cases Jesus heals immediately and fully with just a word or a touch, but this miracle is different. Instead of making a pronouncement or giving a command, Jesus asks a question about the effectiveness of the healing. The man's answer reveals that His sight has only been partially restored.

The context of Mark pushes us to consider the relationship between this miracle and the unbelief of the disciples. It seems that the progressive healing is a means of helping the disciples to see the difference between partial and complete sight. While they were farther along than the Pharisees (who were blind), they still did not see fully.

**R.C. Sproul**– *It is as if, through this two-staged healing, Jesus was saying that the disciples had begun to see dimly. They were not in total darkness as the pagans were. Their eyes had beheld many of the marvelous things of Christ . . . But they had not yet seen clearly. If they had been asked to describe Jesus, they might have said, in effect, I see a mighty oak walking around, but I do not really understand the full measure of who He is.*

#### The giving of full sight (8:25)

After the partial healing Jesus touches the man again leading to the full restoration of His sight. As we keep reading we also see that this miracle serves as a turning point for the disciples. While the previous passage is about their inability to see, in the next passage Peter declares His belief in Jesus as the Christ, marking a clear transition in the faith of the disciples.

#### A command to silence (8:26)

Until the work of Jesus on the cross is completed Jesus continues to command silence from those who see His power revealed. Again, after Peter's confession, Jesus charges them to tell no one (8:30).

#### Thoughts to Consider

- **Our common need** – The Scriptures are clear that all are born spiritually blind and in need of having our eyes opened to the truth. None of us has the means of gaining sight for ourselves, it is a gift of God through the person and work of Jesus that is received by faith.
- **Our common calling** – As we consider this miracle we should be reminded of our need to share the news of Jesus. We cannot open blind eyes, but we have been called to share the message of the One who gives sight (2 Corinthians 4:6).
- **Our ongoing gaining of sight** – While Jesus saves us at a particular moment in time, the Bible teaches that until we see Jesus in glory we will be gradually growing in our ability to see, know, love and trust Him. We must continue to strive to see the beauty of Jesus more and more clearly throughout our lives (1 Corinthians 13:9-12).