

CrossRoads Baptist Church
May 21, 2008 6:30 p.m.
Mark 8: 22-26

“When You Can’t See Clearly”

Johnny Nash wrote a song in 1972 that was number one for four weeks called “I Can See Clearly Now.” According to the internet at songfacts.com, it was also used in the Thelma and Louise movie.

I can see clearly now, the rain is gone
I can see all obstacles in my way
Gone are the dark clouds that had me blind
It's gonna be a bright (bright), bright (bright)
Sun shiny day

I think I can make it now, the pain is gone
All of the bad feelings have disappeared
Here is the rainbow I've been prayin' for
It's gonna be a bright (bright), bright (bright)
Sun shiny day

Look all around, there's nothin' but blue skies
Look straight ahead, nothin' but blue skies

I can see clearly now, the rain is gone
I can see all obstacles in my way
Gone are the dark clouds that had me blind
It's gonna be a bright (bright), bright (bright)
Sun shiny day

That is so wonderful. But what if you can’t see clearly right now?
And how many of you know that cloudy days will come again.

There is an interesting story here in Mark 8 of a man that Jesus touched and initially could not have sung that song; instead, he would have said, “I can’t see clearly.”

So hopefully we’ll be able to see clearly some things tonight as I want us to:

I. Look at the Place this story has in the Scripture

This is an unique story that only Mark tells.

I am not teaching through Mark, but to get an even better understanding of this story, we must see the context in which Mark places it.

1. Feeding of the Four-thousand 8:1-10

Jesus proves once again that he is able to provide for their every need through miraculous ways. He does it this time with seven loaves and a few small fish. He proves His deity by the miracle and proves His humanity by his compassion for hungry people.

2. Pharisees seeking a sign 8:11-12

The Mark moves to the Pharisees wishing to dispute with Him by seeking a sign. Jesus assures them “that this generation will see no sign.” The Pharisees were expecting too much for Jesus.

3. Disciples seeing too little and warned about false doctrine 8:13-21

Then the story of leaven in relation to them having forgotten to take bread. Jesus turns the conversation from physical bread to spiritual bread and even a warning about false doctrine. Don’t let false doctrine (leaven bread) in your life. The disciples quickly responded back with an answer that let everyone know, “We don’t get it.” (verse 16).

Then Jesus talks to them (verses 17-19) about understanding, seeing, hearing, remembering what had just happened. Then he repeats to them the story of the feeding of the four-thousand with the follow-up question in verse 21 “How is it you do not understand?”

Then Mark tells this story.

II. Look at the Process this story takes

A. The story begins with a request.

A man is brought to Jesus by his friends and it is the friends who request that Jesus touch him. Notice, the request did not come from the man.

What a wonderful encouragement and challenge to all of us to use our faith to bring friends and family to Jesus. Men and women who are as very much blinded as this man. Blinded spiritually.

Paul said in II Corinthians 4:3-4 that “if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those....whose minds the god of this world has blinded.”

These friends knew that the only thing Jesus had to do was to touch him and he would get his sight back.

Your attention that you bring to Jesus on behalf of your friends and family can't save them, but it can garner the attention of Jesus on their behalf. Keep praying for that unbelieving spouse, rebellious child or erring friend.

B. The story has a recession

Jesus takes this man by the hand and leads him out of the town. Why?

Some indicate that Jesus may have wanted to give him personal attention. Others think it was not to embarrass him for the lack of seeing clearly.

But I want to suggest two things:

1. He got him out of what was familiar.

Remember, this is a blind man. Familiarity is everything. A blind man will have a small world and a world that he is comfortable in. He knows how many steps it is to the kitchen, how many steps it is to the front door from the bed, how many steps it is down the street to a friends' house. But when Jesus takes him out of the town, he totally messes up his ordered life.

Notice, that Jesus “took the blind man by the hand.” (verse 23) This is almost as if Jesus is grabbing his hand.

Jesus knows that on our own we will never get out of what is familiar to us. Our comfort zones...our places of independence.

This place is now totally unknown and uncomfortable.

There are two ways we get into storms: by making a mess of things in such a way that we create a storm ourselves; or by being led into one totally involuntarily.

Just as I preached Sunday, no one wants to die and neither is anyone standing in line for another storm or crisis in our life.

But when Jesus moves you out by His hand, you won't have to worry about numbering your steps. Instead, your steps will be ordered by the Lord.

But look further...

2. He displayed a remarkable personal interest.

This story is filled with the personal touches of Jesus.

- The friends wanted a “touch” from Jesus. (verse 22)
- He takes his hand and leads him out. (verse 23)
- He puts his hands on his eyes. (verse 23)
- He puts his hands on his eyes again (verse 25)
- When Jesus got him out there, He didn't leave him. And even when the miracle had to go into overtime, Jesus stayed with Him.

Jesus fulfilled the old song:

When the storms of life are raging, stand by me.
When the storms of life are raging, stand by me.
When the world is tossing me,
Like a ship upon the sea,
Thou who rulest wind and water
Stand by me.

C. The story has a real unusual turn

1. The means of the miracle.

When Jesus takes him out, Jesus spits on his eyes. WHAT? Isn't that insulting for someone to spit in your face?

Listen, brother and sister. If you can't stand to be offended, then you don't need to be following Jesus. Why do you think he wants your faith to become public? Why do you think he wants a grown man to get in a pool of water with his clothes on and be baptized in front of family and friends?

Then years later someone gets "their feelings" hurt and leaves the church and Jesus. Heaven help us.

The question I want to ask, "Did the man know it was coming? Did Jesus tell him he was about to do it?"

My feeling is the answer is "no."

John 6:60-61, the disciples told the Lord that there were some hard sayings, who can understand it? They were murmuring about it, so Jesus asked, "Does this offend you?"

Then in verse 66, many of the His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Then Jesus asked the twelve, "Do you also go away?" Peter answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also, we have come to believe and know that

You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Where are you going if you get offended at Jesus?

2. The marvel of the miracle.

When Jesus performs a miracle, you expect the work to be done immediately and perfectly. But there is a marvel here – the miracle was delayed and it took a second touch.

This is doubly marveling because it appears in Mark. This miracle is only recorded in Mark and Mark's favorite expression in this gospel is "immediately." It is used almost 30 times. Yet this time, it was not immediately.

This is the only time in the recorded Scripture that one of Jesus' miracles was not instant and total.

Jesus ask him if he saw anything?

The man replied, "I see men like trees, walking."

This most likely means that the man was not born blind. He could tell the difference in trees and men. Men walk, trees don't. Most likely he saw the disciples. And it says that his sight was "restored." Which most likely means he had seen previously.

So, Jesus touches him again. But this time no spittle. Do you think the man may be jumped a little or flexed when he saw the hands of Jesus coming toward him again?

But note, the man did not run and neither did Jesus. Jesus seldom ever did a miracle the same way twice. You can't put Him in a box.

We know he must have put his head down because Jesus "made him look up."

The thought of "looking up" is looking steadfastly. He was made to fix his eyes on an object – what do you think that was? I think it was

the face of Jesus.

Then he saw thoroughly. He was completely restored and he kept seeing. The Greek here is an imperfect tense meaning continuous action. He saw and continued to see. He could see all things and see them clearly – even the farthest things were clearly seen.

What was the reason for this second touch?

Did Jesus have a power shortage that day? No.

- a. Jesus is warning not to develop false doctrine about my miracles and healings.

Jesus did not spit the second time. He did not use dirt like he did with another.

I'm not a magical wonder.

I will do things in my way and in my time.

- b. Jesus is teaching us that spiritual vision takes time.

No one is ever saved the first time they hear the gospel.

No one responds to the gospel and immediately is a full grown Christian.

No one has a vision of what God is going to do and see it happen the same day. And you most likely will never see all the vision at one time.

But the encouraging news of this passage is that Jesus did not leave him until he did receive his total vision and the work was done.

Spiritual maturity and spiritual vision takes time.

- c. Jesus is teaching His disciples not to lose heart.

We know from the first part of the chapter, they didn't understand. Jesus had scolded them, but now he is encouraging them.

Look at 8:27-30, the story that follows. Peter gets it!!

This miracle may have been as much for the disciples as it was for the blind man.

Conclusion:

Does Jesus have you on a road right now that you don't like? You don't know what He's doing? Or you offended? Are you going to turn back?

Don't run. He won't leave you. Don't leave Him.

One day – you will understand.

And it will be soon. Yes, it might even be in Heaven, but in light of eternity, that is soon.

I love the third verse and chorus of this old song:

Trials hard on every hand, and we cannot understand
All the ways that God will lead us to that blessed promised land;
But He'll guide us with His eye, and we'll follow till we die,
We will understand it better by and by.

By and by, when the morning comes,
All the saints of God are gathered home,
We'll tell the story how we overcame,
And we'll understand it better by and by.