

“Seeing Others Clearly”

Mark 8:22-26

Introduction

- Today we encounter another story of blind man who is healed by Jesus
 - Sight is really important

It was a few weeks ago I had to go in for my yearly retinal exam, retinal as in eye. And they make someone come with you, because they put these drops in your eyes that enlarge the pupil, which makes everything bright and of course you can't wear your contacts for a day afterwards, so you can't see

- Well, my precious wife took me to the appointment with our kids and afterward we needed to get a few items from the store, and she needed to go to Starbucks – but we were running a little short on time
 - so I suggested: drop me off at the store, and you go and run to star bucks – we will meet outside – My wife kind of gave me that, are you sure this is good idea that you wives sometimes give us husbands and she suggested I bring Jonathan with me, which I didn't really understand why
- I didn't understand why because I hadn't really thought things through – with my eyes closed in the passenger seat my eyes worked just fine but when I got out and made my way into the store, I took off the sunglasses, opened my eyes and realized in a strange store – this was going to be difficult
 - Jonathan my 9 year old son who was with me, became my seeing eye dog
 - “Do you see any large sign that says dairy?”
 - “No, that is Pepto-Bismol, that word isn't dairy”

But what should have taken me 5 minutes, took so long and so many wrong turns because I couldn't see

- I saw colors, I saw people as trees as a brother in our story describes, but I did not see clearly
 - And made my think about this story, I knew I would be teaching later on
 - How precious sight is
 - And how difficult it would have been to be a blind man in the first century

You are talking these are the day before glasses, corrective lenses – so even those with poor sight would be in trouble

- and it was in the day before surgeries were developed that can stave off some progressive blindness, that is why I have my diabetic eyes checked, there will be a time when I have to have surgery to give me another 10 years of sight
 - well, they didn't have those things back then

And worse, of course they didn't live in world that was sensitive to people with disabilities

- you didn't have trained seeing eye dogs or street lights that talked, “walk sign is on”
 - you didn't have brail written on everything from menus, to pay stations, to drive up ATM
 - but I don't get that one by the way – how did the blind get to the drive up ATM, but I digress

In that culture if you couldn't see you couldn't work, if you couldn't work you couldn't support a family, so you were normally alone and hungry, a beggar on the side of the road

- and that is the predicament this man found himself in until his friends brought him to Jesus
 - but this is not just another story of a blind man being healed by Jesus

This particular story is only recorded in the gospel of Mark

- and that maybe because most Bible scholars believe that Peter was Mark's source in writing this gospel, very good scholarship behind that
 - and we know that Bethsaida was where Peter grew up
 - He lived and worked out of Capernaum as an adult which was Jesus' base of ministry but he and his brother Andrew were from Bethsaida
- So maybe Peter records this miracle because it happened in his home town, the town of his birth – we don't really know, but I am glad he did because there is much to learn from this miracle of Jesus recorded here only in the gospel of Mark

So as we read in the text this miracle took place outside the town of Bethsaida

- Now Bethsaida is located North East of the sea of Galilee – **Map of Galilee**
 - A little more inland than Capernaum, which is right there on the north shore of the sea of Galilee
- And they have been doing some excavations in the area and just like in Capernaum they have found the first century homes - **pictures**
 - So this one is Peter's because they found the doormat outside and pictures of Peter and Jesus hanging on the wall
 - No – they have no idea which home Peter and Andrew grew up in, but this was the neighborhood

The disciples are ministering in the area and friends bring this man to Jesus

- we don't know why they did - most likely they had heard what Jesus had the ability to do –

But they bring their friend to Jesus

- and He does something really interesting, well really a few things
 - first of all he takes the man by the hand outside the city
 - now think about the care and concern this would have taken
- for a man to hold another man's hand in the first place can be awkward
 - I see girls doing that – just friends holding hands
 - Don't see many dudes doing the same
 - I love Steve Henschel, but he and I have never held hands and walked out of staff meeting together
- But what care, what concern Jesus had for this man as he lead him down the path, balancing him as he stumbled, helping him avoid rocks and trees – all the way outside the city

Now why outside the city?

- Well, some scholars have suggested that the Bethsaida had already been mentioned by Jesus as destined for judgment because of their lack of faith

“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.” – Matthew 11:21

- In Bethsaida they had seen Jesus do many things and yet they did not believe, they had a serious lack of faith
 - And it may be as some scholars have suggested that Jesus is getting this man out of that culture of unbelief in order that He might work in his heart

Sometimes our faith is hindered most by those we are around

- I had an assistant pastor at the church in Texas who whenever we would lay hands on someone and pray they would be healed. And you guys know me, I would pray – Lord touch him, touch her, you are the God who heals, Jehovah Rophe – I bust out the Hebrew when I pray for healing because I am serious about it – but this precious brother would then always pray – “and if you don’t want to heal them Lord, if you want to take them, Lord give them grace to suffer well...” – what????
 - After about the third time I sat that guy down and said look – I know what you are saying – my theology is good – I know God doesn’t always choose to heal because He has another plan in mind
 - But we are not here to have a theological discussion on whether or not God wants to heal this guy, we are praying that God would
- And if God doesn’t then we pray your prayers – but you are bumming people out with your, “help them die with dignity prayers” – come on man!

Remember in Matthew chapter 9, when Jesus came to the ruler’s daughter to heal her and she was dead and so Jesus said, “she is not dead, she is only sleeping” – the Bible says the people ridiculed Jesus, started laughing at what Jesus was saying

- and so what did Jesus do – He put the mockers out
 - they were going to hinder what Jesus wanted to do as lack of faith always does
- And maybe there are some people in your life who are hindering what God wants to do – because they mock God and His principals with their life style and thought process

Maybe before God works in your life He will need to lead you away from them for a time

- that could be the reason Jesus led him out of the city or it could just be that Jesus wanted to avoid the circus atmosphere that sometime surrounds healing ministries
 - people who draw a big crowd to watch God work and it becomes about the healing not the healer
 - that is not new to our culture – it was around in the first century as well

So Jesus takes this guy out of the city and then, I love it - He spits in His eye

- it is amazing the variety in which Jesus choose to heal people
 - some just received a touch
 - all some had to do was touch Him
 - some were told to go their way and their faith had made them well
- but this guy, Jesus spits in His eyes
 - now we read, with our Bibles with our lattes in our hand – oh that’s nice
 - have you ever had someone spit in your face

When our church was new in Paris Texas, when my wife would do women’s ministry, I would run the children’s ministry

- and I loved doing it, except for this one kid – oh man, I am telling you the antichrist is alive and well, he’s about 8 years old now and lives in Paris Texas
 - this kid was a night mare – I would get all the kids to sit down, I would start telling them a Bible story, this kid would say, I don’t want to hear about the Bible – my kids would just look scared
- one day, I got right up to him, listen, the Lord loves you and wants you to learn about Him – and this kid spist in my face – it is very humbling to have some spit at you

So again – let's put down the latte and understand – Jesus spits in this man's face

- now scholars argue about why
 - spit was seen as medicinal and again Jesus is putting His stamp of approval on medicine – maybe
 - Jesus was giving him a point of contact for his faith – something to activate his belief – maybe
- But Jesus spit in his face

But I point this out to you – hoping you realize it worked – Jesus knew what He was doing

- we love to acknowledge Him as Lord, but then He starts to work in our lives in a way, we in all our wisdom of 30, 40, 50 years don't agree with
 - and we buck a little bit
 - Listen – He is either Lord or He isn't
 - He is God of the universe or He is not
- And if He is Lord and He is – then it may feel like you are being spit in the face at the moment – but precious ones – would you trust that He knows what He is doing
 - He has been at this God thing for a while
 - He knows what is going to be the best for your life
 - And wise is the believer – that says, Lord I don't get this – it feels like you are spitting in my face
 - But I trust that you are God – and I will follow you!

Now onto the healing – Jesus touches this man the first time, and then asks him, “what do you see” – and the man responds – “I see men like trees”

- Jesus lifts up his head, touches him again and then this blind man begins to see all men clearly
 - Now what is going on here?

Is this teaching us that like us God sometimes doesn't get it right the first time – Does God live by the policy - if at first you don't succeed, try, try, again?

- In Hawaii they tell you the story when God first created Adam
 - And he was a white man, and when God saw him, God said, oh, no, he is not done, he's so pale, we took him out of the oven too soon
 - And so God made a second man and pulled him out and he was black man and God said – oh no – we have over cooked him, he is too dark
- And the third time, God created a man, he was a Polynesian, with tan brown skin and God said –ah now that is just right

Now is that the way it works with God?

- No, of course not – I think practically, this miracle shows us that God does do progressive healing
 - Sometimes He heals us a little at a time and teaches us lessons along the way
 - We want instant healing, - we want instant growth in our Christian lives
 - But God will not be put in our box

Sometimes He works on a different time table than us and it is always because I need to learn a lesson

- Moses knew He was supposed to be the deliverer of the Israeli people from Egypt, Joseph knew he was supposed to save his family – David knew he was supposed to be king over Israel
 - But God had a different timetable than Joseph or Moses or David
 - But the cave time, the wilderness time, the time in prison were needed in each of those men's lives

Well okay – then what was the purpose of this progressive healing in the blind mans' life?

- I don't know for him, but I see something in this for us to take away spiritually
 - the man is first touched by the Lord and his sight is restored, but he sees men like trees
 - and then God lifts up his head, touches him again and then and only then does he see all men clearly
- I see a parallel and a great lesson in this for our lives

God touches our lives for the first time – we were blind but now we can see – we are saved

- and we love God, we love that He loves us
 - but it isn't long into our Christian experience that we experience something
 - I love God, I do, I do, I do, but those people of His, those other believers I have to fellowship with – ah I have a problem with them

It has been said – “To dwell above with saints we love – oh that will be glory, but to dwell below with saints we know, well that is another story”

- We love God – but we see men as trees
 - We wish they would leave – wood leaf – get it?
 - They stump us
 - Do you know what I mean – yeah you say - I am experiencing that right now with your lame jokes – when did you say Pastor Rob gets back – sorry - you are stuck with me for weeks - sorry

God touches us – we love Him, but we see men as trees - But even though it is a common experience – it is not okay

- For when Jesus was asked what is the greatest commandment, what did He say – He said to love the Lord your God, with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind - we have that one down

But then the second is like it, Jesus said or in other words – it goes along, it is just as important – the second is like it, “we must love our neighbor as ourselves”

- And who is our neighbor? – the Bible answers that one too – everyone we encounter – we are to love God and love people

Now loving God – easy – He is easy to love

- but people – with their attitudes and their flesh – oh Loving people – Lord I can't see
 - so what does God do to the man in our story?
- He makes him look up – He makes him look up – the posture of prayer – and He touches him again – and then and only then he begins to see all men clearly

You see I really don't know what was happening in this man's life

- but for me – when God touches me and I love Him, but I see men as trees, a little shady, then I need God to touch me some more
 - I need him to lift up my head

- I need to look up to Him – in prayer

Jesus said in Matthew 5, “I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you” – Matthew 5:44

- “pray for those who spitefully use you” ??? – why should I pray for them?
 - Because prayer, listen, prayer, listen - prayer begins to change my heart

What happens when I pray for people?

#1 – I begin to see them positionally

- What do I mean by that – when I pray I begin to see who people are “In Christ”

Pastor Rob is doing this whole series on Wednesday Nights about who we are in Christ

- it is such an important thing for us to understand, not just for ourselves
 - but we must understand it for others
 - especially those who rub us the wrong way – those we see as trees

The issue, the problem is I see people in the flesh – I see them with all their problems and struggles and attitudes, I see them in the flesh

- but Paul the apostle said in II Corinthians chapter 5

“Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh.” – II Corinthians 5:16

- Paul says, I am determined to know no man according to the flesh
 - I don’t want to see people anymore – how they are in the flesh
 - I want to know who they are “IN Christ”

So who are “In Christ”?

- Well, first of all we are His bride – we are the bride of Christ
 - Now men, think this through with me – you know your bride, you know if your bride is like mine that every once in a great while, at least once a year – my bride sins
 - I know my wife sins – but, but - I don’t want you pointing out things that are wrong with my wife – that is going to kill our friendship – she is my bride and I love her
- Now why do we think we can talk about the bride of Jesus that way – He loves His bride – even the one that rubs you the wrong way, even the one you see as trees, they stump you
 - In Christ – that person is the bride of Christ

We are the bride of Christ and we are children of God

- Now, I am a father - I love my children – and listen, I know they are not perfect
 - I know they have issues – last week my son brought his pocket knife to children’s ministry and pulled it on Dave Standifird – oh man
 - I know my kids have room to grow – but, but, I don’t want to hear that from you – I want to deal with them
- I know they have issues, but they are better than your kids – oh, wait – why did that upset you? – because I am talking about your kids – you see that is not okay
 - So – what makes us think we think we can talk about God’s kids and not rile up the Father
 - He loves His kids – He knows we are sinners, He had to die for our sins
 - But He loves His kids

You see we need to see who people are positionally, not after the flesh, but who they are in Christ – the Bride of Christ, a child of God

- But not just positionally, in prayer I begin to see people....

What happens when I pray for people?

#1 – I begin to see them positionally

#2 – I begin to see people prophetically

- prophetically – not just who they are in Christ – currently from God’s perspective, but who they will be in Christ when Jesus is done working on them
 - You see, you might say, well the person I see as a tree, they are not in Christ, they are in the world, so your little analogy falls short for them
- Okay – they are not yet in Christ – and how are they going to be won – by your bad attitude towards them, really?

Is your bitterness worth them going to hell?

- If your answer is yes – it is you my friend who has a problem
 - How are they going to be won? – when you demonstrate, when you are a living example of Christ’s unconditional love in their lives
 - Who are they in Christ? Who will they potentially be in Christ?

Man looks on the outward, God sees the heart

- I think of Samuel and the sons of Jesse – Samuel is told by God to go to the house of Jesse and anoint one of Jesse’s sons to be King
 - And with each son, they were tall and good looking just like King Saul – but God had not chosen any of them – because God doesn’t choose tall people – oh I’m sorry
- But in comes David – just a little runt, with pretty eyes and God sees what David will someday become – the King over Israel
 - He saw David as he eventually would be – the King of Israel
- May God help us to see our kids, our spouse, our friends, our pastors – as who they are going to be in Christ

Well, I don’t have that imagination? I can’t see people who they will prophetically become in Christ – how do I see how someone is going to potentially be?

- Again – as God lifts up your head – as you pray for them
 - Lord, this person rubs me the wrong way – they have hurt me, I am angry
 - But I don’t want to see them in the flesh

I want to see them as who they are in You – Your bride, Your child – I want to see what You are going to make them

- Oh Pastor, I hear what you are saying, but this person in my life, it’s not a minor disagreement, it is not just a personality conflict
 - I have really been hurt by them
 - They have really damaged my family
 - And they have never asked for forgiveness
 - They have never acknowledged what they have done
- So I can’t pray for them that way – their wrong, their sin has not been dealt with.

Oh friend, that may be absolutely true – and you are right, without them being willing to reconcile, you may never be buddies and friends

- but the issue is deeper
 - you see bitterness doesn’t hurt the person you are bitter at
 - it hurts you – it rips you off – it rips your family as it spreads to them
 - you are being ripped off

- So whether they are ever sorry or not, whether they ever acknowledge their sin or not
 - You have to get over this or you will be destroyed

But how if their sin has never been dealt with

- oh – you see – but it has

This man was touched by Jesus, loved Jesus, but saw all men as trees

- so Jesus lifted up his head
 - as we are touched by Jesus, love Jesus, but people, ah people
 - God help us to lift up our head in prayer and we begin to see people positionally and prophetically

But one more thing is important this morning

What happens when I pray for people?

#1 – I begin to see them positionally

#2 – I begin to see people prophetically

#3 – I see their sin paid for by the blood of Jesus

- When I see men as trees, what do I do? What they did to me has not been dealt with – oh I need to look to another tree
 - We went over this in Exodus, but remember the children of Israel are wondering thought the wilderness, they are thirsty and they see a pool of water at Mara – so they run, jump in, take a swig and it is bitter
 - The people start to rebel against Moses – so Moses says, what do I do? – God showed him a tree – throw the tree into the equation, Moses and those bitter waters will be made sweet
 - So Moses obeyed and the waters were touched

Well, all things that were written before, were written for our learning –these are true stories that happened to real people, but the spiritual lesson for us – what lesson

- well again – Jesus touches me – I love Jesus, but people, ah people – I see them as trees, I just want to bark – get it, trees, bark? – anyway...
 - so He lifts up my head in prayer – I begin to see people not in the flesh, but positionally in Christ and prophetically in what Christ will do in their lives
 - and then I need to lift up my head to another tree to deal with my bitterness – the tree of Calvary, the cross of Jesus Christ

You see, maybe you are bitter at someone and you are justified, they really hurt you, you were sinned against – and your heart tells you – someone needs to pay

- friend, I am here to tell you someone already did pay
 - Jesus was brutalized on that cross for your sins and for the sins of the person who has sinned against you
 - Jesus paid – and are you going to tell me that what Jesus did wasn't enough?

Jesus paid – for my sins – and in prayer as I rehearse everything Jesus has forgiven me, I can't help but feel forgiveness for others

- That is why Jesus taught us to pray – **“Forgive our sins as we forgive those who have sinned against us.” – Matthew 6:12**
 - In fact Jesus goes on to say....

“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” – Matthew 6:14-15

- if we will not forgive, neither will God forgive our trespasses

Now, I don't want to go down a rabbit trail this morning – I don't think salvation is conditional – but I do think if you will not forgive, what Jesus is saying, what He is indicating, is you have never truly dealt with your own sin

- But at very least – if I hold onto bitterness and unforgiveness – I will go through life like the man in this story – stumbling around, not seeing clearly, not effective, not able to provide what my family needs spiritually
 - I will be a mess

And some of you are maybe in that place

- you have been touched by Jesus, you love Jesus
 - but people – you see as trees
- and you are stumbling around life, because all thought you love God with all your heart, with all your soul and all you mind, but the second commandment – love your neighbor – not so good

So let God lift up your head this morning

- Commit to pray for your enemies
 - Ask God to help you see them not in the flesh, but who they are in Christ – who they are positionally, who they will be prophetically
 - And ask God to lift up your head to see the cross – to see that Jesus died for your sins, you have been forgiven a whole lot and He died for the sins committed against you
- And not just you – but teach your family to do this as well – my bitterness toward others can spread to my children
 - So teach them – we are not going to be bitter
 - They are the bride of Christ – a child of God – we are not going to see them in the flesh, we are going to see them in Christ – their sin covered by the blood of Jesus

We are going to take communion – the men will pass it out and I want you to hold it – as we partake – the bread – my sins were dealt with, You have forgiven me so much – the cup – You bled for the sins that were done against me – and as right now I just want you to, under your breath, but move your lips – you tell the Lord, I remember what You did for me, but also for that person's sins – you name them, you name the wrong that was done against you – you remember that it was paid for on Calvary's tree – God, may we see no one any longer as trees, but may we, like the man in the story, may we see all men clearly