

Mark 8:22–33

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[0:00] Mark 8, verses 22 through 33. And they came to Bethsaida. And some people brought to him a blind man and begged him to touch him.

And he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village. And when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, Do you see anything?

And he looked up and said, I see people. But they looked like trees walking. Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again, and he opened his eyes.

His sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. And he sent him to his home, saying, Do not even enter the village. And Jesus went on with the disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi.

And on the way, he asked his disciples, Who do people say that I am? And they told him, John the Baptist. And others say, Elijah.

[1:03] And others, one of the prophets. And he asked them, But who do you say that I am? Peter answered him, You are the Christ.

And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him. And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, and the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed.

And after three days, rise again. And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, Get behind me, Satan. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man. This is the word of the Lord. Well, it's good to be back home.

Having been away a couple of weeks. Maybe even a little bit more sun tan look. Got my summer shirt on. Spent time at a lake in Wisconsin.

[2:23] Caught a 28-inch northern pike. And didn't have my camera with me to prove it to you. It's refreshing, though, to step away.

And I hope that many of you have that opportunity likewise in these summer months. But I come back refreshed. Lisa and I are encouraged and strengthened to continue the work that God's given us here as a church family.

I want to title the sermon from this section, which, by the way, is the turning point in the Gospel of Mark.

It is the hinge upon which the book is turning. I want to title it simply this. Partial sight can be a perilous thing.

Partial sight can be a perilous thing. Partial sight can be a perilous thing. I learned this principle at the hands of an elderly pastor of visitation.

[3:29] When I was a tender minister at the age of 24 or 5 or so, he took me on a trip to the hospital to visit someone.

To teach me what it's like to care for someone who's been laid up for a while. And so I got into his four-door Volvo with big, heavy doors.

And now I realize why his kids had him driving that kind of car. And we began to set out for the hospital only to come to an intersection and have him drive up and over all of the medians along the way, never really realizing what had happened.

You see, his vision was quite impaired. Partial sight can be a perilous thing. It's true in the physical realm.

It's even more so true in the spiritual realm. That's what we're going to look at today. To not see Jesus for who he is and why he has come is to place yourself in a dangerous situation.

[4:43] Notice the text, very simple. The blind will see. The disciples will speak.

And then our Savior will instruct. So it's dealing with the nature of sight. And in particular, partial sight.

And so we have this story of a miracle about a blind man who sees. Peter who has something to say. And Jesus who will teach in light of it.

The blind see. It might be good to ask yourself the question this morning. So how good is my eyesight? How good is my eyesight?

How good is your eyesight? In the text, we meet a man whose eyesight wasn't very good at all.

Verse 22. They come to Bethsaida. Some of the people brought to him a blind man and begged him to touch him.

[5:47] And he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village. And when he had spit on his eyes and laid hands on him, he asked him, do you see anything? And he looked up and said, I see people.

But they look like trees walking. Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again. He opened his eyes and his sight was restored. And he saw everything clearly.

And he sent him to his home saying, do not even enter the village. I have some ability to resonate with the subject of the miracle.

The awareness of partial sight. Five years old, October 1966.

Having a wonderful mud ball fight with my friends in the front yard. All the mud balls appropriately stacked in the radio flyer wagon. And we began to hurl them.

[6:52] And one was hurled toward me and hit the left eye and took my sight. I still remember going in the bathroom with my mom, rinsing my left eye out, holding her hand over my good eye and asking me, can you see now?

No, I still can't see. Four operations later, they got me to a point where it's simply light can enter in. If you're wondering why I wear dark glasses and if I had my preference, I'd be wearing sunglasses inside and out. It's because there's no filter for me anymore.

I have partial sight. Now, it's better than being blind, but here we meet a man who was completely blind and then by God's intention only provides him partial sight.

Reasons for which we'll see later when we discover what Peter has to say and Jesus has to instruct. But he's given partial sight on the way to complete sight and healing.

[8:05] I'm curious, and I hope you are, why a miracle related to the recovery of sight for the blind?

To what end? You might have asked it on the front side of this unit in Mark.

Just prior to the feeding of the 4,000 with which our chapter opened, he had healed a deaf man.

Which makes me wonder why the healing of a deaf man, followed by the feeding of a multitude of men, bracketed then by the healing of a blind man.

Why open the eyes of the physically blind in an effort to lead the disciples toward a more complete understanding of spiritual sight?

I think, and I know Pastor Nee mentioned this before, but it's worth restating. The prophet Isaiah wrote that when God would come into the world to bring salvation, he would do so in this manner.

[9:33] Ready? Let me quote it. Isaiah 35, 5. Then, that is, when God comes to save his people once and for all, then the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped.

And so he shall come to save. In other words, these miracles that we're seeing Jesus perform in Mark's gospel are intentional, particular, fulfillments of what would happen when God came to save the world.

Spiritually, not merely through our physical problems. So these earthly miracles, this one here in particular, grouped as it is with the deaf man, is fulfilling a very nuanced reading, a textured reading of the Old Testament.

You know, I think it was Cicero who said something to the effect that the face is a picture of the mind as the eyes are its interpreter.

You might have heard the eyes are the window to the soul. The physical eyes, in a sense, show you the light of life. Let me put it this way. What you're putting your eyes on, what you delight in, and what you desire are reflecting something internally regarding your heart.

[11:15] So the man who is blind, spiritually, might set his eyes on many earthly things, but miss the mind of God because he's on the things of earth.

So Jesus comes along, having been frustrated, let's say, with his closest group because they're not getting it.

You say, prove it to me, pastor. All right, well put your eyes on the section just above our reading. What's the last thing Jesus said before he healed this blind man?

Take a look at verse 17 of our same chapter. Why are you discussing that we have no bread? Do you not perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened?

He's saying this to his disciples. Having eyes, verse 18, do you not see? Having ears, do you not hear? Do you not remember when I broke the five loaves for the 5,000, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?

[12:27] They said 12. And the 7 and the 4,000, how many baskets full? They said 7. And he said, do you not yet understand? Now I can identify with the disciples here as well.

I don't know if you like math or math class. Some of you love math. You and I have very little in common. You know, we had one of the brightest people in the country attend here a while ago. He was an undergraduate student. He had the promise of becoming one of the world-class mathematicians. And I remember walking by him once.

He was standing on the corner of 58th Street and Woodlawn off the sidewalk looking like this. And I was approaching him from some distance and he didn't move.

And I finally came up to him and I said, David, how are you doing? And shook him out of his trance and said, by the way, what are you doing? And he looked at me and he said, oh, pastor, math is beautiful.

[13:44] To which I said, have a good day. Jesus has just come out of math class with the disciples.

These elementary questions. Aren't you guys seeing it? Don't you get the equation? How many baskets did you take up? Twelve.

How many? Seven. Are you still not getting that I am the one who's coming to fulfill the textured readings of the Old Testament? I'm opening the ears of the deaf.

I'm standing like God before his people in the wilderness and providing bread and manna in abundance and beyond. Not only for you, but for more.

What don't you see? And of course, they didn't see. They were like me with my geometry teacher. As long as she was in the classroom at the board with the chalk doing the problem.

[14:47] I could do it. But as soon as I had to go home and do the same problem. Game was over. So what Jesus does here in our verses is he takes his boys out of school.

He puts them on a yellow rented bus. And he says, we're going to Bethsaida for some field experience. You don't learn it in class.

So I'm going to show it to you in Bethsaida. And now he takes a blind man and heals him in an effort to indicate to him that blindness, spiritual blindness is terrible.

Partial sight on who he is isn't even great yet. In fact, it's perilous. He wants a complete understanding of who he is. And so the man is healed.

The blind see. It shouldn't surprise you then when you look at the text for yourself. That while the blind man can now see by the end of verse 26.

[15:52] Jesus is more interested in what the disciples have to say. Concerning what it might mean. Did you notice that? It moves from the blind seeing to the disciples speaking.

It moves from something in the physical realm to his desire to know what they think it means concerning who he is. Why he's come.

In the spiritual realm. Jesus went on with his disciples. Verse 27. And on the way he asks them a question.

Who do people say that I am? They told him. Some John the Baptist. Others Elijah. Others one of the prophets.

And he asks them again. But who do you say that I am? The grammar here is what they would call emphatic. It's you.

[16:51] Who do you say? Who do you say? I am. It's a question on his identity. As the one who's fulfilling in a textured way.

The promises of the Old Testament. Indicating that they would think you are. The son of God. The son of God. The Christ. The anointed.

Who brings salvation to our souls. Not merely healing to our eyes. In fact the miracle. Is the interpretive indicator.

That you are the messenger. Sent from God. So his interest is in what they have to say. Now notice what Peter says.

It's the first time. In this reading of Mark. That we've been in for a few months. That one of the disciples. Is accurately answering the question.

[17:57] Peter says you are. The Christ. Now in Matthew's gospel. He got a little. Annotation there. Almost then Jesus comes and says.

Yeah you didn't get that on your own. You blind follower of me. The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is now giving some. Partial. Partial understanding.

He's got the right term. You are the Christ. Now we need to stop here just for a moment. Because we're all interested this morning. In how your eyesight is.

How our eyesight is. Are we even able to say he's the Christ. And if so what do we mean? The Christ means.

In some sense. Simply. The anointed one. The promised ruler. The one who would come.

[18:59] The one who would come. To restore God's reign. Over everything. It's not his last name. His name isn't Jesus Christ.

The way mine is David Helm. He's Jesus. The Christ. And this has gone all the way back. To the very opening verse. Of the gospel. Take a look.

If you've never read Mark before. It's worth taking a look at. And I know there are some. Even here in our midst this morning. Who wonderfully. Gave their life to Christ. Even this week.

Praise God. Praise God. The testimony of some. Even here in our midst. This is the week. I began to see him for who he is. But the very opening verse.

Of the gospel says. This is the beginning of good news. Of Jesus. Christ. Son of God. Now for eight chapters. Mark has been trying to prove.

[19:57] I think he's the Christ. I think he's the anointed one. I think he's the high king of heaven. I think he's the high king of heaven. Who do you think he is?

How's your spiritual eyesight? Could it be? Is this Jesus that we've been reading about? You come back next week.

And we keep reading about? Is actually the anointed one. Who fulfills the textured understanding.

Of the old testament. Where God says. I'm going to come. And I'm going to save people.

And I'm going to restore their relationship. With their creator. Grammatically. Here. The shift. To the disciples.

But who do you say. Ought to actually. Really. Ought to penetrate. Your own mind. The preacher ought to say. At this point.

[21:02] Yes. Beyond Peter. And beyond the disciples. The question of the hour is. But who do you say. He is. The Christ.

No. The. The ability to testify that. Is an indication that God is. Helping you.

Get a new set of lenses. On him. You know. The. The hymn. Be thou my vision.

O Lord of my heart. Not be all else to me. Say that thou art. Be thou my vision. That was actually. Penned.

In the sixth. Century. By. An Irish. Poet. Get it. Who was blind.

[22:07] That. The physical. Blindness. Did not. Prohibit. One. From being able. To pen. Lyrics.

That. Testify. I want you. To be. My. Vision. High. King. Of heaven. He believed.

Do you. Do you believe. Peter. Peter. Peter. Peter. Says. You're the Christ. Wow. But. But it moves. It moves.

The text. Moves. From the blind. Seeing. And the disciples. Speaking. To now. Jesus. Teaching. This is the most important part.

What does Jesus make. Of the connection. Between the blind. Receiving sight. And the disciples.

Calling him. The Christ. Now.

[23:05] Jesus. For the very first time. In the gospel. We haven't read anything. About this yet.

Connects. The salvation. He's come to bring. With the sufferings.

He must endure. We haven't seen that at all. Our salvation. Right here. Is linked. To his sufferings.

He began to teach them. Verse 31. The son of man. Must suffer many things. And be rejected. By the elders. And the chief priests. And the scribes. And be killed. And after three days.

Rise again. And he said this. Plainly. Spiritual sight. Requires us. To think. Of. Our salvation.

Demanding. His sufferings. Now that's a new concept. For many. Might be new.

[24:07] Even for you. Oh. Well. Let's put it this way. It was new for Peter. I mean. When God comes to save. What's that going to have to do with suffering. I thought he'd get in here.

He'd come in here to alleviate all that. Isn't he? But Peter. See that's what Peter thought. This is where you know. When you're in school. And Jesus is the teacher.

You're better not to speak. At every opportunity. But here he is. Turning and seeing his disciples. He rebukes Peter. Why? Because verse 32. Peter took him aside.

And began to rebuke him. See Peter said. You're the Christ. You're the anointed. You're the high king of heaven. You're fulfilling the textured understandings. That alleviate suffering.

Now. That doesn't equate. In Peter's mind then. With him suffering. He pulled apart. Our salvation. And his suffering.

[25:04] But Mark says. He began to teach them. Back to 31. That the son of man. Must. Suffer. This is. Critical for us to get.

The necessity. Of his. Sufferings. Why? Why does.

Why does. Our salvation. Require. A substitutionary. Death. Of Jesus. Why can't he just say.

Come on back home. Why can't he just overlook stuff. To get on with stuff. What. Why. Sufferings.

And. Salvation. Or. To put it more bluntly. Why does Jesus say to him. Look at that. Incredible. 33. Get behind me.

[26:00] Satan. For you're not. Setting your mind. On the things of God. But the things of man. See the mind of God. Connects. Our salvation. To his suffering. The mind of man.

Would never. Connect. Good things. Come to us. In our relationship. With God. That demand. The suffering. Of his son. Let me see.

If I can get after it. For. For Peter. Christ. For Peter. For Peter. Christ. Simply was a political. Social. Kind of term.

He was the anointed one. He was going to be the king. He was going to be the ruler. He would be the one. Who would deliver. Israel. From. All of her. Earthly problems.

That's what he thought. The anointed one would do. But for Jesus. He was much more than that. In fact. For Jesus.

[26:59] He was in a sense. I've come from heaven. I'm not about this earth. And all of your temporal issues. I'm about another world.

I'm about heaven's kingdom. And heaven's kingdom. Cannot be reduced to an earthly enterprise. Enterprise. Enterprise. The restorer.

Of the universal breach. That sin had made. Between God. And ourselves. Is different. Than being a rescuer. Of some ethnic breach.

That Israel. Felt and experienced. As a consequence. Of their. Earthly. Enemies. It's a very different thing. So. Let me.

Let me just. Put it to you this way. Why. The suffering. In one sense. Jesus wants to make sure that. Peter's. Expectations. Don't.

[27:53] Get beyond. The actual experience. I would just call this. Discouragement. If. If Christianity. Gets equated. With all things.

Good. With no sufferings. To be endured. If you think that's what Christianity is. You're going to be discouraged. You know. I was just very recently. On a.

Nice. Grassy patch. Listening to an incredible. Vocal artist. Who had the unusual. Power. Of stirring up.

An audience. About Jesus. However. Continued to. Tell us. That the word from God. Was that you needed something done by Labor Day.

And it was going to happen. If you believed. Well. When he. When he put that out there. He asked you to stand up. Now. I. I stayed seated for. For myself.

[28:51] Just to kind of think about this. But. Boy. He got people into a frenzy. That. That the kind of Jesus. He was going to offer. Was going to get something done for you. In the positive way. By Labor Day.

If you believed it. Well. And I. I turned to Lisa. At that very moment. And said. I wish I could put my. Phone number. On the screen. In front of these. Thousands of people.

And I wish I could say. Call me. The day after Labor Day. And I'll tell you about the Jesus. I know. See.

Because when you over promise. What Jesus is going to do for you. In the here and now. You are bound to under deliver. Which is why so many people.

Right now. Are deconstructing. From the Christian faith. Because they have bought. A gospel message. That separates. Our salvation.

[29 : 45] From his sufferings. Or his sufferings. From our participation. In them. As well. You got to get this right. Or you're just going to be.

Disillusioned. And disappointed. Throughout life. This is the problem. When people over promise. What Jesus can do for you. He does not promise.

To heal my left eye. He doesn't. He promises. That if I hold him. To be the Christ. Who can forgive my sins.

I have spiritual sight. Like the writer. Who was completely blind. But able to sing. Be thou my vision. See this is critical.

When your expectation. Of what Jesus can do for you. Gets in front of the actual experience. That might come to you. You will be disillusioned.

[30 : 43] And turn away from. The Christian faith. Secondly. It's very important for Peter here. To get this right. Because for him. To begin to proclaim Christ.

Without the cross. Well it's going to be impossible. To convey. God's good news. As truly good. You see we sinned.

The penalty for sin was death. We were under the wrath of God. He's not going to turn. A blind eye. To it. If he's good.

And righteous. That sin must be atoned for. He can't just walk away from it. He doesn't have a blind eye. To turn toward our condition.

He must fulfill the law. In complete perfection. And be merciful at the same time. Which is what Jesus can do. Jesus does this.

[31 : 45] He's absolutely righteous. And he takes on a penalty. Of our sin. Wasn't his.

He took yours. He took mine. So that now we wear the righteousness of Christ. He dressed us up. Not just by helping us turn over a new leaf. But by changing our very heart. This is what needs to happen for Peter.

If Peter is going to preach. A Christ. Without a cross. He cannot convey. The good news. As being truly good. I hope you get it. Straight. Finally. The crux of the issue.

[32 : 42] Peter has set his sights too low. You separate your salvation. From sufferings. You set your sights too low. Isn't that kind of the way Jesus puts it.

And I'm shutting it down. Get behind me. You're setting your mind. On the things. Not on the things of God. But on the things of man.

His gaze. Right. His gaze is too low. It's just on the earth. What are you going to do for me now? Christ.

Anointed. Ruler. Get me out of this situation. Double my cash flow. Triple it if you can. Do something temporal.

No. No. He's saying. Get your eyes up. Those are all the things of the earth. Get your eyes up on heaven. He's come to restore your relationship with him. It requires the sufferings of his savior.

[33 : 39] Lest God not be righteous in executing judgment. And be merciful in his ability. To extend it to you. And to me. That is the crux of the issue.

Jesus has come to restore spiritual things. That our sin against God. Ran amok. It's true today. I'm telling you. People everywhere. Christians and non-Christians.

In the church. And outside the church. Have a deficient view. Of Jesus. As the Christ. And it is disheartening. Then.

When he doesn't make good. On what you expected him to do. By Labor Day. It's disillusioning. Then. In regard to why you would hold it all.

You deconstruct. Your faith. All because your sights are on the things of men. And not on. The things. Of God. To miss this.

[34 : 36] And I'm done. Is to miss the mind of God. To reject. That your salvation. Requires his sufferings.

That's to require. A rebuke from God. To not see this. As I've told it to you this morning. As clearly as I can. Is to be blind. To the things of God.

So. I ask you. How good is your eyesight? Take a Christ. That requires a cross.

So that payment can be made. That makes you a child of God. Our Heavenly Father. We thank you for the chance. To be together this morning.

We pray that our eyes. Would be lifted up. We would see a Jesus. Who does far more. Than we are asking him for. Lord forgive us.

[35 : 34] We're embarrassed. By the limitations. We've placed on the. Depth of the things. That you would do for us. Reach down within us. And give us hearts.

That love you. Worship you. And give us sight. That would hail you. As the high king of heaven. In Jesus name. Amen. Well let's stand and go out with a song.

Thank you.