

# An Insight of a Miracle

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[0:00] Let's turn back and look for a short time at Mark chapter 8, Mark's gospel chapter 8, and we're going to look again at verse 22, page 1017, Mark chapter 8 and verse 22.

And they came to Bethsaida. Bethsaida is a town, if you look at the map of the Lake of Galilee, Bethsaida is a town at the north end of the Lake of Galilee, slightly to the east.

So just to give us a picture of where that town is in relation to Jerusalem and every other place that we know. 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 spat on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, do you see anything?

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

[1:16] His sight was restored and he saw everything clearly. And he sent him to his home saying, do not even enter the village. I don't need to tell you that the story of Jesus is a story full of miracle.

And miracle is where Jesus, by his own unique power, breaks into the norms. The norms that restrict us. And shows that he is the Lord of these things by changing them and by exercising authority over all these areas.

And I don't need to tell you that there's a difference between a trick and a miracle. Anyone who describes Jesus' miracles as tricks simply hasn't taken the time to examine them fully enough. These were things that were done in front of people. They were done in public. And they were done so that people could see. And so that by seeing, they would believe not just in how wonderful these things were, but that they would believe that Jesus was indeed the Son of God.

But there were times when Jesus refused to do these things in public. And this was one of them. In fact, this incident here, this miracle here is different, isn't it?

[2:45] It's different from many of the other miracles which Jesus carried out, if you're familiar with his life. And for one thing, there were many blind people who Jesus healed.

There was no shortage of blind people at that time. And Jesus healed them. Normally, that healing process would be instantaneous.

It would be the touch. Jesus would place his hand or even say the word. There was one occasion, of course, when a man whose servant was ill, a centurion's servant was ill.

He reckoned, he worked out in his own mind that Jesus didn't even need to come to where he was. But all he needed to do was to say the word and his servant would be healed. And that was absolutely correct. There was no reason for Jesus to touch anyone in order for that person to be healed.

His authority could operate in a word or even not even in a word itself. Jesus could simply will it to happen and it would have happened. And yet, nevertheless, it's not just that Jesus is able to do extraordinary things and to carry out extraordinary healings.

[3:59] But Jesus, one of the things about the miracles is the way in which he carries these things out. And we're not just to see how unusual or how extraordinary Jesus' miracles are.

We are also to read the particular way in which they happened. And I want us to see that in this passage, there are four things that are different, four unusual events, which surround the healing of this blind man.

And even though it was a healing that took more time than other healings did, it was still a miracle. It was still a man who went out that morning blind, unable to see anything, and who came home that

evening with his eyes open, able to say, I was blind, but now I see.

And I hope that we'll see also that in the way that Jesus carries out these miracles, there are lessons. Jesus is preaching to us and he's making known to us how we may be saved.

That is always the purpose of a miracle. The miracle is not just for the healing of the person who was healed, but also to announce to us who Jesus was and how we can be right with God through him.

[5:24] So every time you read one of the miracles, you are hearing the gospel. You are seeing the gospel. Jesus is announcing to you that I came into the world to seek and to save those who were lost.

That's the point. Jesus did not come into the world to impress people. He didn't come into the world ultimately to heal one or two individuals. He came so that through those works that others would come to believe, just as I said this morning, that what John says, these things are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Four things then about this miracle that I hope will give us a little bit more information about Jesus and how we may be saved.

First of all, these are put in the form of four questions. First of all, why was it that Jesus took the man outside of the village?

Let's read the story again. They came to Bethsaida and some people brought to Jesus a blind man and begged him to touch him. That was their prayer. We have to believe that these people who brought the blind man to Jesus had a faith.

[6:43] They had faith to believe that Jesus could heal the man and they were serious about who Jesus was. But Jesus, instead of touching him in the way that these people expected or anticipated, Jesus' touch was a very different one from the one that they expected.

He did touch the man, but he took him by the hand and he led him out of the village. That's the first question then.

Why was it that Jesus took the man outside of the village? And not only did he do so, not only did he lead him out, but he led him out by personal contact.

And I want to suggest to you today that there is a very important reason why he did so. We'll see it a little bit later on in the reason why he told him not to go again into the village.

But the reason is two things coupled together. First of all, Jesus did not come into the world to be a celebrity. There was no shortage of people who followed Jesus just to see one more miracle.

[7:55] And it seemed that the more they saw, the more they wanted to see. They couldn't get enough of seeing miracle, strange thing, marvel after marvel. But it did absolutely nothing to change them or to draw them to Jesus.

Even those who, it appears, started out following Jesus, many of them went back. Because the challenge of following Jesus was just too great.

And there were others, hundreds of people, who would make a point of going to be where Jesus was, to watch what he did and wanting to see one more miracle.

And yet it did nothing to change them. And Jesus knew this. But he was concerned more about the personal needs of this man than he was about how many people he could impress or astonish with his power.

Instead of doing this publicly, as he could have easily done, he took the man by the hand and he led him outside of the village. Because it was more important for the man to see the nature and the character and experience the personal care and compassion of Jesus.

[9:13] For Jesus, it was just as important for him to show, to demonstrate, the love of God in Christ personally to this man. There's another instance very similar to that.

And that's when Jesus went with Jairus. Remember how Jairus met with the Lord? His daughter was dangerously ill on the point of death. Twelve years old.

He came and he begged Jesus to come and to heal her. And Jesus started on the road. Now Jesus knew all along how dangerously ill the girl was.

And he could have there and then said the word. She would have been healed. And yet, even knowing that within moments she was dying, he went with the man because there was something important in him going with Jairus.

In his accompanying Jairus, he showed his own personal care and interest, the grace of God in the gospel. You see, because to God we are not just numbers.

[10:18] We're not just statistics. We're not just barcodes. In so many areas of life, is it not true that we're just a number held on some computer or some record somewhere?

That's not the way it is with God at all. David recognized God's individual personal care when he said, Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up. Even my thoughts are known to you. And it's important for us tonight to stop for a moment and to remember that each one of us is an individual person in the sight and in the eyes of God.

And God has not written us off. You know, society can write people off. It's even possible for you to write yourself off. Some people actually hate themselves.

And because they hate themselves, they think that God must hate them too. They begin by saying, I think so little of myself. I think I'm nothing.

[11:19] I have absolutely... You know, to me it's awful to think. But it's true. There are some people in the world who utterly hate themselves. I don't know why. I guess by a process in which they've gone through some awful experiences.

Maybe in their childhood or in their upbringing. Maybe they've been rejected by family or spouse or someone they thought that loved them and turned out not to love them at all. There are experiences which people go through and they end up hating themselves.

I think it's the saddest possible thing when you come across a person that hates themselves.

Because they come to the conclusion that God must hate them as well. And what this passage shows us, that here is a person who could have just been another statistic.

Who could have just been another record. Just been another astonishment to the crowd. And Jesus could have just touched them there and then. But he chose not to. Because Jesus cares for this person.

And he loves this person. And he brings him away from the crowd. To whom he... See, once the crowd had seen Jesus healing this man. They would have forgotten all about him.

[12:31] They would have turned their attention on to someone else. Because that's all they were interested in. All they were interested in is the marvel and the drama of a miracle. But Jesus was interested in the person.

And that's why this, as well as every other miracle, relates to where we stand before God. And what our view is of God. And we have to begin by recognizing that God does not hate us.

The Bible never says, whatever you think of yourself, God does not hate you. God has made you for himself. His interest and his concern and his compassion is towards you.

Whatever has happened and whatever has taken place in your life. God thinks more of you, perhaps, than you even think of yourself. Isn't that amazing?

That's what the Bible says. What does it say? It says, God so loved the world. Ah, yes. But you say, you don't know what's happened in my life. I don't know, but God does.

[13:34] And Jesus came to be where people were who were hurting. Luke chapter 15, he was surrounded by those who other people had no time for whatsoever.

The sinners, the tax collectors, the scum of the earth. People who other people hated and who hated themselves. God's not like that.

Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and rising up. Why is it that God has searched his unknownness? Because God has a saving concern for you as an individual. Just as he had for this person. The question is, are we prepared to accept, by faith, the love of God in Jesus Christ?

That's the first thing. Why did Jesus take the man outside of the village? And I believe we can learn a lot about the character of Jesus. Then the second question is this.

[14:38] Why did Jesus spit in the man's eyes? It's quite incredible, isn't it? That the very Jesus, who was able to raise someone from the dead just by a word, It appears he had to do something very different to open the eyes of this man.

Something physical. Not just a word, but physical. Now there are all kinds of suggestions and opinions as to why this could possibly be. Some people believe it's a symbolic transfer of something from Jesus to the man.

Some people actually believe that there is medicinal substance in spit. I don't know. I'm not a doctor. I don't know anything about it. But some people believe that this was accentuated in the miracle itself by Jesus.

One thing is that we know that Jesus knew what he was doing. And this is one of those places that calls for faith. To believe that Jesus not only was able to do what he set out to do, But that he knew every moment what he was doing.

Jesus spat in the man's eyes for reasons known only to himself. There are many areas in the gospel where we have to come and we have to fall at the feet of God.

[15:59] And we have to say, I don't know, but you do. And you know, there are many people who use that as an excuse for not believing. They say, because I don't understand, because there's a question here that nobody can answer, I'm not going to believe.

Are you really going to stake your life and your eternity on one or two things that you don't know? Or are you not prepared to say, well, God is God.

He's bound to know. He knows what's best. Faith is what places myself in his hands, knowing that he knows what is best.

A third question is this. Why did the healing take two attempts? That's what it appears to be on the first place, doesn't it? He spat on his eyes and laid his hands on him.

In verse 23. And he asked him, do you see anything? It's quite strange, isn't it? Is that what the confidence of Jesus amounts to?

[17:06] That this Jesus, who's able to raise people from the dead, seems at first sight to have difficulty in opening a man's eyes.

Verse 24. And he looked up and he said, I see men, but they look like trees walking. Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again. And he opened his eyes and his sight was restored and he saw everything clearly.

Not only does it appear that Jesus is not confident about what he's doing, but it appears that he needed to have two attempts before he was successful in the miracle.

That's not what it was at all. That's only one way of reading it. That's only when we read it as a skeptic. And I don't understand how we can't read the Bible as it is.

And read it in the light of everything else that's gone before and that goes afterwards. It's quite a legitimate question to ask, why did the healing take two attempts? But they weren't two attempts.

[18:10] They were two stages. And I want to suggest to you that the reason that Jesus took those two stages was not because he was unable to complete it in one go.

It was because he was deliberate in his two stages. And the deliberateness was to get a message across to unbelieving disciples.

See, when you read this passage in the light of the passage that's gone before it, I believe a lot of understanding comes to light. What happens in the passage before? Well, Jesus speaks to his disciples.

And he says this. Jesus, aware of this, he said to them, Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Verse 17. Do you not yet perceive or understand?

Are your hearts hardened? Verse 18. Look at what he says. Having eyes you do not see. And having ears you do not hear.

[19:09] And do you not remember when I broke the five loaves and the five thousand? How many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up? Now, the situation was this. The disciples were growing in their understanding of who Jesus was and their own relationship to him.

Same as we must grow in our understanding. And it's like I said this morning. Perhaps there are some of you, even here today, and you feel that you feel such a difficulty in believing that you don't know how to proceed.

And I believe that you're not alone in that at all. I believe that many of us have come to know gradually who the Savior is and how we may come to know him by faith.

There are very few people in the world that start off being a total unbeliever, and that by the end of the day, in a moment in time, they are believing in Jesus. I believe that the more common process is a process in which a person begins to change.

By the power of God, he begins to change. And very often that change is gradual. It sometimes takes years for a person to understand stage after stage.

[20:26] And I believe that this is exactly a picture of the way that it is for many people as they come to understand the gospel in Jesus Christ.

Maybe there's someone here this evening, and you're at the very beginning of your understanding of Jesus. Maybe you don't understand a huge amount.

The important thing above everything else is not to stop. It's to keep going, it's to keep asking the Lord to open your eyes. To open your eyes more and more to see him and to understand him and to perceive him and to appreciate him and to see what he has done for us.

I believe this is a parable. A parable that is acted out. Not because Jesus was unable to heal the man instantly. He was able. He did it deliberately in order to encourage the disciples who were themselves having difficulty in their own understanding of Jesus.

To encourage them to keep on looking to him. To keep on asking. And sometimes you have to come to the Lord and you have to ask him to simply show you.

[21:42] To make himself known to you. To reveal himself to you. Fourth question and last question. Is why did Jesus tell the man not to go back to the village?

Once his sight was restored. Once his eyes were opened. Once he saw everything clearly in verse 25. Jesus' last words to the man were equally strange.

Saying do not even enter the village. Do not even enter the village. I wonder how our world would respond to Jesus if he were to come into the world today in the same way as he came into the world in those days.

I believe that he would attract massive attention. Just as he attracted massive attention in those days. I believe that all the media attention would be upon him.

He would be invited to chat shows everywhere. He would be in all the newspapers. The newspapers would all be reporting on one other miracle that Jesus had done. And that his fame would go all over the world.

[22:51] And that's the way it was then. They didn't have the media. They didn't have the technology that we have. But they still had the attention. And they had the hysteria.

And it was easy. It was all too easy. To follow the crowd. If the crowd decided they were going to be amazed at Jesus. Then so be it.

It was easy to be part of that crowd. And to go with them. And to watch what was happening. But that's not faith. In fact there can be a sinfulness about giving Jesus media attention.

Without giving him our heart. Maybe you would be amongst that crowd. Maybe you would be paying just as much attention. Maybe you would be switching on the TV.

Every time Jesus was on. To see what next he had to say. And to watch what next he had to do. And maybe you would think that by so doing you were following Jesus.

[23:53] But that's not what it is to follow Jesus. Just the same as it's not about coming to church. And it's not about being religious either. It's about coming to know Jesus personally.

As our own saviour. And coming to trust in him. As our own Lord. And for Jesus I believe. That sending this man back to his village.

Would be one more amazement for them. And one more reason for them to be astonished.

At his power. And at his person. But astonishment. Is not faith. Besides there was another reason. And the other reason was.

That Bethsaida. Had already seen. Enough of Jesus miracles. And they had refused. To believe. I read that passage in Matthew chapter 11.

[24:56] Which is a very solemn passage. Woe to you. Chorazin. That was another city. Woe to you. Bethsaida. For if the mighty works.

Done in you. Had been done in Tyre and Sidon. They would have repented long ago. In sackcloth. And ashes. Jesus. As I said. At the very beginning.

Came into the world. To demonstrate. By his own power. His own person. And who he was. But there comes a time. Where. God says.

That's enough. I'm not going to show you. Anything else. If you haven't believed. Now. After all I've shown you. You're not going to believe.

If I show you more. There's a very. Solemn element. To this passage. In which God speaks. I believe. To us. This evening.

[25:53] Particularly. Those of us. Who have grown up. With the gospel. And you know. Perfectly well. How God. Has revealed himself. To this world. You know.

Perfectly well. That. The step. Needs to be taken. By you. That God. Invites you. Tonight. To come. And trust in him. And to believe in him.

He has given you. Every proof. Every evidence. Every reason. Even to the point. Where many of you. Tonight. Say. I believe the Bible. I believe.

Everything about Jesus. I believe he was the son of God. I believe he died. As the sacrifice for sins. I believe he rose again. And yet. I do not. Follow. Jesus.

There comes a point. Where God says. No more evidence. No more demonstration. There's only.

[26:48] A warning. Woe to you Bethsaida. For if the mighty works. Done in you. Had been done. In Tyre and Sidon. They would have repented. Long ago.

In sackcloth. And ashes. Surely tonight. After all. We have seen. Of the gospel. And after all. You understand. Of the gospel.

Surely. Surely. It's time. Once and for all. To recognize. That Jesus. Is Lord. To accept him. As Lord.

And Savior. To turn away. From all. The badness. And the wrongdoing. And the sinfulness. In your life. And to follow him. And follow him.

Alone. Before. It is too late. Let's pray. Our Father in heaven.

[27:44] We ask. Tonight. That you will give us. That faith. That will come to Jesus. And that will trust. In him. As our Savior. And as our Lord.

And we give thanks. Oh Lord. For one more opportunity. Of hearing your word. And. Every time we hear it. We see a fresh demonstration. Of the power. And the.

Purpose of Jesus. In coming into the world. But it is. A message also. It is a warning. It is an invitation. For every one of us. To come.

As we are. To the Lord. Oh Lord. May we do so. And may we discover. What he can do for us. And what he has already done for us. On the cross. In Jesus name.

Amen.