

Sermon Notes May 30
Mark 8:22-33

Mark 8:22-25 - Part #1.

22 They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him.
23 He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?"
24 He looked up and said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around."
25 Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. 26 Jesus sent him home, saying, "Don't even go into the village."

Mark 8:27-30 - Part #2.

27 Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?"
28 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets."
29 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"
Peter answered, "You are the Messiah."
30 Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

Mark 8:31-33 - Part #3.

31 He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.
32 He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.
33 But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

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Mark 8:22-26 (Part 1)

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Introduction

As we continue our study through the Gospel of Mark, we find ourselves face-to-face with one of the strangest stories in all of the New Testament.

It is certainly one of the oddest miracles in the ministry of Jesus and the most baffling event in the Gospel of Mark.

That is saying a lot, considering we have already seen Jesus cast demons out of a lunatic and into pigs that run squealing head-first into the sea.

This particular story is one of those moments in the life of Jesus that startles us, leaves us unsure what to think, and just hoping that no one will ask us about it.

1. The story begins normally enough, but the longer it goes, the stranger it becomes.

A. Jesus and His disciples now go to Bethsaida.

- 1) Someone brought a blind man to Jesus and implored Him to touch him.
- 2) At this moment, Jesus did what any of us would do in this situation.
- 3) Jesus takes him by the hand, leads him out of the city, spits in his face and touches him.

B. We all know that's exactly what to do when confronted with someone who needs to be healed.

- 1) But Jesus does something really bizarre.
- 2) Oddly enough, this is not the first time Jesus has done this.
- 3) In Mark 7, Jesus stuck his fingers in a man's ear and then proceeded to touch his tongue with His saliva.
- 4) This is also not the strangest part of Mark 8.
- 5) The odd part is not that Jesus spits in the man's face; it's what happens next.

C. In verse 23, Jesus says something shocking: "Do you see anything?"

- 1) This is a question you do not expect Jesus to ask.
- 2) We expect Jesus to make an authoritative statement that the man has in fact been healed.
- 3) Instead, Jesus asks the man, "Do you see?" as if to say, "Did the miracle work?"

D. This is strange for a number of reasons.

- 1) First of all, Jesus usually knows when something works, and it usually works!
- 2) Miracles are not really a problem for Jesus.
- 3) As we hear Jesus' question, we almost wonder if Jesus was going through a bit of a slump in his miracle working.
- 4) Maybe He had tried one a few days before in front of a lot of people, and it didn't go so well.
- 5) Maybe now, Jesus is a little bit nervous. He doubts his abilities.
- 6) So, instead of taking a chance in front of a crowd of people, he leads the man out of the city, tells the man that He will try, and does it with a bit of a "here goes nothing" mentality.
- 7) And after he tries, He sheepishly says, "Do you see anything?"

E. What is even stranger than Jesus' question is the response of the blind man.

- 1) Verse 24 tells us that the man says, "I see men, for I see . . ."
- 2) OK, Let's stop right there.
- 3) The blind man who was brought to Jesus can now see.
- 4) He says twice that he can see. "I see men." "I see."
- 5) Obviously, something miraculous just happened.
- 6) Jesus touched the man and he was healed. Or was he?
- 7) The man continues and says, "I see men, like trees, walking around."
- 8) Either this man has found himself in a village surrounded by very large men with extra extremities, who look like trees, or perhaps somehow the man is seeing, but he is not seeing clearly.
- 9) And so at the end of verse 24, we find a man that has been healed-sort of.
- 10) His sight is restored-partially. He can see, but not clearly.

F. So, Jesus goes at it again.

- 1) Verse 25 tells us that Jesus looked at the man intently,"
- 2) Then again He laid His hands on his eyes . . ."
- 3) At the end of the verse, it says, "and he began to see everything clearly."
- 4) The second work of Jesus seemed to fully heal the man.
- 5) Jesus, aware that the man had been healed, tells him not to go back to the village and not to tell anyone what happened.
- 6) After two attempts, the man finally sees clearly and went away with clear instructions.

2. This is a strange story. What do we do with a story like this? Well, we have a few options.

A. Option Number One

- 1) This is not really an academic option but it seems the most obvious.

- 2) Maybe the reason the man could not see is because he had spit in his eyes.
- 3) After all, Jesus did just spit in his eyes and then ask if he could see.
- 4) Sure, he can see, but it is a little blurry with spit in his eye.
- 5) Jesus wipes it out and there you have it, perfect sight.
- 6) I will admit this is not a great option, but it is an option.

B. Option Number Two

- 1) Maybe this was a very tough case of blindness.
- 2) There is Bartimaeus blindness in Chapter 10 of Mark, and there is Bethsaida blindness in Chapter 8 of Mark.
- 3) Maybe Bethsaida blindness is a tougher kind of blindness, and it just takes a couple attempts, even for Jesus.

C. Option Number Three

- 1) Maybe Jesus was making a statement about today's modern medicine?
- 2) There is an article from a Christian medical journal using this text found in Mark 8 to point to a condition called agnosia.
- 3) A person is able to see, but the brain is not communicating with the eyes.
- 4) They see, but not clearly.
- 5) This condition was just recently discovered.
- 6) Maybe Jesus was letting us know that He knew about this medical condition before anyone else knew about it.
- 7) It is a decent option, but it is interesting that Jesus might be making a point that would not be understood for 2000 years.
- 8) This too does not seem like the best option.

D. Option Number Four

- 1) Or could it be that Mark has placed this story right here in Mark 8, a story that he alone records, as an illustration of a point he is trying to make.
- 2) Could it be that there is a deeper meaning to this story that WE cannot yet see clearly?
- 3) Well, before looking at the best option, let's move on and leave this story for now. We will come back and try to answer some of these questions in a moment.

3. As we move from the *Strangest* story in the Gospel of Mark, we go on to the most *Climactic* moment in the gospel of Mark.

A. Thus far, everything in the Gospel of Mark has been leading up to this moment in Mark 8:27-30.

- 1) In the first 8 chapters in Mark, Mark is trying to answer one question, and one question alone: "Who is this man named Jesus?"
- 2) In chapter 1, he answers the question four times.
 - He answers it when John the Baptist says He is the Messiah.
 - He answers it when the Father opens up heaven and declares Him as His Son.
 - He answers it when Jesus says, "The time is at hand; the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the gospel."
 - The question is even answered when Jesus walks from the temple and is confronted by the demons, who say, "We know exactly who You are, you Holy One of God."
- 3) Over and over, Mark is attempting to answer this question.
- 4) The only problem is that no one seems to get it. No one seems to understand who Jesus is.

B. This is certainly clear in the third chapter of Mark.

- 1) To the crowd, Jesus is a fascinating man who does a lot of wonderful things.
- 2) They are convinced it is worth keeping an eye on him.
- 3) To the religious leaders Jesus is an infuriating man who does a lot of frustrating things.
 - They are convinced he is demonic.
- 4) To his family he is an embarrassing man.
 - They are convinced he has gone insane.
 - They are so convinced of his insanity that they go and try to take him back home

by force.

- 5) And the disciples, who of all people should understand, do not know what to think about him.
 - They are confused.

- It becomes more evident with every chapter that Jesus is the Messiah, and it seems with every chapter that the disciples are more and more clueless.

C. Remember what happens in Mark chapter 4.

1) Jesus calms the sea, gets into the boat, and the disciples look at Him and say, “Who is this man?”

D. In Mark chapter 6, Jesus feeds 5,000 people, walks on the water, and meets them in the boat.

1) They are terrified by Jesus’ power over the sea because they “gained no insight from the incident of the loaves.”

2) They did not get any closer to understanding who Jesus was, even after watching Him miraculously feed the 5,000.

E. Chapter 8 is an even more startling example of the disciples’ lack of understanding.

1) Prior to this miracle, Jesus fed 4,000 people.
 2) Remember that he had already fed 5,000 other people.
 3) This was the second time they have watched Jesus miraculously feed a multitude of people.

4) After the miracle, Jesus had an interaction with the Pharisees.

5) Jesus and the disciples got into the boat.

6) He talked to them about the leaven of the Pharisees and giving them some important kingdom principles, but they are not listening to Him. They are distracted.

7) We learn they were not listening because “they began to discuss with one another the fact that they had no bread.”

F. We do not know everything the disciples should have known by this point, but one thing seems certain.

1) they should have known that coming up with bread is not a problem for Jesus.

2) If Jesus can do anything, He can come up with bread.

3) He has already miraculously provided for 5,000, then for 4,000.

4) Let it be known, Jesus multiplies bread well.

5) There were 13 people in the boat, and 12 of them could not concentrate on what Jesus was saying because they were so worried about the fact that they do not have enough bread for their short trip.

6) This is shocking. How could they be worried about bread?

G. The conversation in the boat shows that Jesus was obviously not pleased with their lack of understanding.

1) He actually unleashes on them with a series of eight questions.

- *Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread?*

- *Do you not yet see or understand?*

- *Do you have a hardened heart?*

- *Having eyes, do you not see?*
- *Having ears, do you not hear?*
- *And do you not remember how many baskets full of broken pieces you picked up when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand?*
- *When I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of broken pieces did you pick up?*

2) Then He looks at them and says, "*Do you not yet understand?*"

3) When you hear this question, you can almost feel the intensity, the echo of that question ringing in the air, and the daunting silence that followed.

H. The answer to Jesus' final question is clearly, "NO."

1) They do not understand who He is.

2) They appear to be completely blinded to the reality that they were in the boat with the promised Messiah.

3) It is at this very moment, as the question is still echoing, that the text moves immediately to this strange healing story.