



CANYON HILLS

COMMUNITY CHURCH

Series: Mark

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Eyes to See

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I don't know if you've heard. Some little thing is going on tomorrow where we're all supposed to turn blind. We're all going blind tomorrow, so I thought, in case they just missed it by a day, I am going to be prepared. I'm going to be protected, so I'm just going to leave these on until after tomorrow, if that's okay with you. No, I won't do that. Supposedly, we're not supposed to look directly into the blazing bright sun. Have you all heard that now? Are you okay with that? All right. Let's just take care of that business right here.

Hey, it has been fun having the kids worship with Mom and Dad in the month of August. This is that moment in the service now where they get to go have fun with Pastor Larry and his team of volunteers, so if you're one of the kids in here with Mom and Dad who need to be over there... Larry, I always forget. I think you said the second through fifth-graders who are in here can go. Have fun!

While they're doing that, let me remind you again. You're going to be hearing about this as much as you've heard about the eclipse. On September 10, we're going to four services. The first one is at 8:00, the second one is at 9:30, the third one is at 11:00, and the fourth one is at 12:30. Okay, now, as you know, it's a little harder to tell while we're in the midst of summer, although this service is pretty full today... We are out of room.

We've been making plans to do this fourth service for many, many months, and it will be a tragic disaster (are you getting my tone right here?) if everybody in the church just went to the middle two services at 9:30 and 11:00. Now, I know those may be the most convenient, possibly, for some, but for some of you... Maybe you don't have little kids at home and you're able to get started a little earlier and you can join us in the earlier service.

Maybe you don't have teenagers in your home. We want them here at 11:00 because that's when their service meets for them. You can go to the later one. We're just asking you, would you please consider spreading out a little bit? Otherwise, all the effort it's going to require to make room for more people is going to fail.

I don't know how to say that any stronger than that but to say we've always been a church that works together with the motive of knowing there are lots of people whom God is drawing here, and we want to make sure there's a place for them to sit on Sunday. Thank you for just thinking about that and considering that. I hope you will.

All right. Let's open our Bibles to Mark, chapter 8. The gospel of Mark, if you'll remember, exists to answer two eternity-shaping questions. In chapters 1-8, Mark is attempting to answer the question, "Who is Jesus?" In the second eight chapters, 9-16, Mark wants to answer the question, "What did Jesus come to do?"

As we've seen, Mark's style of writing is interesting. He doesn't include a lot of emotion or backdrop. He just very succinctly keeps the spotlight shining very brightly on every word and action of Jesus. That's what the gospel of Mark is like. It's very fast-paced with all of the focus on Jesus, because when we're done going through the gospel of Mark, Mark has one desire.

He wants there to be no doubt that you and I understand that when we see Jesus, we see God. He wants us to be sure we know when we're listening to Jesus, we're listening to God. When we're worshiping, loving, and trusting Jesus, we are worshiping, loving, and trusting God. Now, in today's passage, there are going to be four separate incidents or scenes that all link together for the divine purpose of Jesus opening the spiritual eyes of his disciples to see and understand who he really is.

Now, to add importance to that, I think it's really important that all of us remember that we've all been given two sets of eyes. We've all been born with physical eyes to see and understand physical things. There are varying degrees of eyesight in this room. Some of you are blessed to have fighter pilot vision. You have perfect eyesight, or even better, and the rest of us have some varying degree of blurriness and dimness. Some may even be here totally blind today.

We've also been given spiritual eyes. The Bible refers to these as the eyes of the heart. They help us to see and discern spiritual things. Just as there are varying degrees of physical sight, there are also varying degrees of spiritual sight, from knowing and understanding God really, really well, all the way to the other side of that scale, not knowing or understanding anything about God.

Today, I want to show you through these four separate scenes that God graciously and patiently works to open our spiritual eyes to see him and understand him more clearly. He's always at work, accomplishing that task in your life and my life. Let's get started. If your Bibles are open and ready, let's stand for the reading of God's Word. We're in Mark, chapter 8.

"In those days, when again a great crowd had gathered, and they had nothing to eat, he called his disciples to him and said to them, 'I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. And if I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way. And some of them have come from far away.'

And his disciples answered him, 'How can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place?' And he asked them, 'How many loaves do you have?' They said, 'Seven.' And he directed the crowd to sit down on the ground. And he took the seven loaves, and having given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and they set them before the crowd.

And they had a few small fish. And having blessed them, he said that these also should be set before them. And they ate and were satisfied. And they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full. And there were about four thousand people. And he sent them away. And immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha." Let's pray.

O God, we do give you thanks with our lips in worship and our hearts in prayer today for your Word, for in your Word you remind us that you are the King who is robed in majesty. You are armed with strength and compassion. God, we just affirm, right now, standing before your Word, that this world is firmly established by you and it cannot be shaken.

Your throne, O God, has been established since before time began and your commands can never be changed because your reign is in perfect and total holiness forever. So, God, we surrender ourselves to the safety of your loving, sovereign, and compassionate arms today. Meet us in this place, God. We pray in Christ's name, amen.

You are not experiencing déjà vu. It was just a few chapters earlier, in chapter 6, where Jesus fed the 5,000 with five loaves and two fish. If you were here on that Sunday, you remember that wasn't that long ago. Instead of going over all the application and details of this scene in redundancy, today I want us to just focus in on the first couple of verses.

In verse 1 of chapter 8, it says in those days, again, a great, huge crowd had gathered and they were following Jesus to hear him preach. We're not surprised by that because Jesus is God's fountain of grace and truth. It's only by God's grace and truth that we can ever discover true, lasting hope, a hope that lasts longer or beyond our next weekend, purchase, date, raise, drink, or fix. Jesus gives hope that permeates the soul. It produces a peace and a joy that is more powerful than any circumstance or trial. For this kind of hope, absolutely, grace and truth are required.

I love the way the apostle John describes Jesus in John, chapter 1, where he says, "**And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.**" You see, Jesus spoke truth that was saturated in grace and he spoke grace that was saturated in truth. The crowds could not get enough of him.

In verse 2, we see Jesus saying, "I have compassion on these people. They've been with me for days now, and we're out of food, and it's a long way home." I want us to take a minute right here to allow God to open our spiritual eyes a little bit more to see him more clearly. You would think, when Jesus said this to the disciples, they would look at each other, knowing now what we know in chapter 6, and get excited and say, "Okay, we've been here before, guys. Jesus, you take it from here. We'll be your servants. Let's do this."

But that's not what happens. Their spiritual eyes are still dim to the true character and identity of Jesus. It would be natural for you and me, as Christians, as we're looking back at this, to think, "Really? Wow! Come on, guys. You've already seen Jesus display hundreds of times his amazing divine power over disease, death, and nature."

Personally, this week, before I had a whole lot of time to get all judgmental and self-righteous, I started to realize how many times God has intervened in my life and I forget. You see, I'm learning one of the consequences of sin, unfortunately, is that we always forget the things we need to remember and we always remember the things we need to forget. That's what sin does.

So, I forget how many times God has displayed his awesome power in my life and circumstances, and so I panic, I get discouraged, and I start to worry, wonder, and doubt. "Does God really care this time? Is he going to care? Does he see this? Does he know?" I think this brings us to our first point of application. This is what God wants us to see and understand more clearly.

1. *God's compassion covers over our entire life's experience.* Saying that a little simply, Jesus shows us that God cares about the everyday details of our life. God really does care about those who seek him and trust him. Yes, the message and the mission of Jesus is ultimately way more eternal than the temporal circumstances of any one day or season of tribulation we may face. We understand that, but don't miss that the Creator of your life and the Savior of your soul really does care about those daily bread moments of everyday life.

It's right here, right in front of us. You see, one of the things that happens because sin clouds our spiritual eyes about God is that we start to believe our stuff is too little for God to care about. God has so many big things to solve, doesn't he? World peace, hunger, famine, and the Mariners ever making the playoffs. I mean, impossible things like that, right? We look at that stuff and we're convinced it probably doesn't matter to God.

That's exactly where I think the disciples may be here in chapter 8. They missed the lesson in chapter 6, obviously, because they didn't see it. They were wandering and wondering again, "Does he care about these people? Is he going to feed them to? Does it matter to him that these people are without food, hungry, and weak? Does he care about those things?"

So, Jesus patiently intervenes again, but he doesn't rebuke them. He doesn't scold them. He graciously, enduringly shows them again and 4,000 are fed with 7 baskets leftover. They leave with him, get in a boat, and go to the other side, another place. The God-man is not irritated. He cares about the details.

I'm just wondering if there's an area in your life where you struggle to trust God to meet your needs. I thought of a couple. Maybe in the exhaustion you feel when you have nothing left in the tank and you're heading down the hall to discipline or correct your child for the billionth time, do you pray? Do you believe he cares about this detail of your life, or have you forgotten that God has shown up in these moments hundreds of times before?

How about in the anxiousness you feel every day you go to work knowing a coworker or your boss is going to suck the joy right out of your life? Do you turn to God for compassion, love, grace, wisdom, and endurance, or do you think, "God doesn't care about this mundane day in my life"? What about the loneliness you feel when the weekend hits or the shame you feel when you've fallen to that temptation again?

I want our eyes to see today that, just like Jesus, God is not irritated. He has compassion for you, not just these people in this story. For you, today and tomorrow. Yes, absolutely he cares first and foremost about your soul. He was willing to come to earth and die in order to pay the price for our sins so we could be forgiven and have eternal life. We agree with that. That's the gospel. Yet he is also the Redeemer of boundless compassion over the details of your life. Don't hesitate to bring your smallest need to him.

I love the apostle Peter. I can relate to him. He very appropriately penned these words. He said, in 1 Peter 2:6, "The one who trusts in him will never, ever be put to shame." That includes all the little things.

Scene two. Verse 11:

"The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him. And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, 'Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly, I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation.' And he left them, got into the boat again, and went to the other side."

You see, the disciples aren't the only ones following Jesus. The Pharisees are following him all around as well, but they're arguing with Jesus. They're critiquing him. They're even challenging him. Jesus blows me away here. They're saying to Jesus, "Jesus, why don't you try to impress us? We know you were out there with all those other people, the commoners. They were good and hungry and had a long way to go, so yeah, they were listening, but why don't you do something that impresses us?"

I love Jesus here. He doesn't say, "Okay, watch this," and then cause a third arm to grow out of the tops of their heads. That's what I would have done. "You want a sign? Here's one!" Just dangling up there... That's what I would have done, but Jesus doesn't do that. Instead, it says he sighs deeply in his spirit. This sigh was a judgment upon them. He's grieving by how blind they are, but they're not like the disciples. These Pharisees aren't struggling to see and understand who Jesus is. They are refusing to, and there is a big difference.

See, he has already controlled and commanded the forces of nature, disease, death, and even evil spirits, and it still wasn't enough for them. Jesus is saying here, "I am the sign. I'm the sign. There's no greater sign of God, of God's love and grace to save you, than me. I'm the ultimate sign from God, from the Father."

This is why Jesus sighs so deeply. They were *willfully* blind. They determined not to listen, not to see, not to understand the obvious grace that was right in front of them, and so they took their stand against him and they were willing participants in their own blindness. I believe this is what Jesus knew. He knew if he couldn't satisfy them, nothing would, and so he walks away. The Judge would not be judged.

2. *Knowing the true God of all power is far greater than the power itself.* The second thing God gives us grace to see and understand is that knowing him as our Father through faith in his Son, Jesus Christ, is the greatest grace in the universe.

Listen to what God says to King David in Psalm 46:10. **"Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!"** Listen to what God promises to Jeremiah regarding his people in Jeremiah 24:7. **"I will give them a heart to know that I am the LORD [God], and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart."**

I love what Jesus prays to the Father on our behalf in John 17. He prays for me and you and he says, **"And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."** You see, when you reject Jesus and refuse to see that he is God, God has no grace for that. No grace.

I suppose it's true that there are some sitting right here in this service who are willfully, stubbornly looking for any and every reason not to see it. You've already decided God hasn't impressed you enough. He hasn't given you enough signs that he really exists or really cares about you.

If that is you this morning, I could promise you something. You're in good company, because if it weren't for the grace of God in many of our lives, we would be sitting there with the same exact feeling, but because of the grace of God, he has opened our spiritual eyes. Be careful, because the path of willful, spiritual blindness is treacherous and it is utterly destructive. Listen to how the Bible describes it in 1 Chronicles 28:9.

"And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever."

Again, make no mistake about it. The disciples were also blind, but they got back in the boat with him. They kept listening. They kept seeking. They kept searching. The promise is, when we seek him, we will find him.

Third scene. Verse 14. They just left the Pharisees. They get in the boat, they're cruising along.

"Now they had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. And he cautioned them, saying, 'Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the

leaven of Herod.' And they began discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread. And Jesus, aware of this, said to them,

'Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?'

They said to him, 'Twelve.' 'And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?' And they said to him, 'Seven.' And he said to them, 'Do you not yet understand?''

Jesus takes this private moment in the boat to warn them about the Pharisees he had just rejected and walked away from. He knows their spiritual eyes are still dim. He knows they missed that lesson as well, but the disciples are in the boat, eyeballing the last loaf of bread. Apparently, in all the commotion, they had forgotten to eat. They think, with Jesus talking about all this yeast stuff, he's talking about that lone loaf of bread in the boat.

This is what Jesus was telling them. It's the third thing God continually works to give us grace to see and understand. It may be the hardest one of all, really, for our spiritual eyes to discern.

3. *Being religious is not the same as being righteous.* See, the Pharisees had PhDs in being religious. They went to church. They knew their Bible, but God had no claim on their hearts. None. He's warning the disciples of this very wicked thing they just experienced with the Pharisees.

He's saying just like a little yeast impacts a big lump of dough, a little religion can deceive your heart and blind your spiritual eyes. See, religion is about rituals, not relationship. Religion is about convenience. It's not about conviction. It's mostly about rule-keeping, not about grace-giving or grace-receiving.

I don't know who said it, and I'm not sure I'm quoting it perfectly, but I've never forgotten it. Here's the difference. Religion always attempts to make bad people good. Jesus didn't come to make bad people good. Jesus came to make dead people live. You can still be good and dead, spiritually dead and blind. Jesus came to make dead people alive.

Religion can be a heart-blinding sin. He was pointing out the disciples that we can't really estimate our spiritual life and maturity by just Sunday morning attendance, the amount we give, or the volunteering we do. Jesus refuses to let them miss that lesson with the Pharisees. He's graciously and patiently letting them know God wants to be our reason for everything we do, say, and think. God wants to be the main desire of our hearts. He wants to be the source of our abundant life.

He created nothing in this world to satisfy us and give us lasting hope and satisfaction. Nothing. That hole in the heart that people talk about? God put it there. Ecclesiastes 3 talks about God

putting eternity in the heart of every person. We realize there's something missing. We can't grab hold of it. He wants to be our motive and our source for all happiness and joy because he knows he is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him.

Church, I want to be able to say to you that the reason for everything in my life is God. I want that, and I want that for you. A life of faith that sees and understands that when we have Jesus, we have everything. When that starts to take root in our hearts, do you know what happens? We can actually start to watch the news and not get scared. We can watch all the nonsense going on in our world and we don't panic. We don't freak out. We don't get depressed because we know when we have Jesus, we have everything. For that, there is grace.

Last scene. Verse 22:

"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 look 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 [where everyone was demanding a sign].'"

Wow! This miracle of this blind guy is the ultimate picture of the gospel, as we'll see here in a minute. It's the synopsis of all the verses we just looked at together. Think about it. Jesus opens his physical eyes by touching him. In the same way, Jesus opens our spiritual eyes by touch us with his love, grace, truth, and sacrifice.

You guys, the cross is the biggest eye-opener in the universe, is it not? This guy can see partially at first. In the same way, our spiritual eyes take time to see and understand. It's a process because there are pockets of sin in our hearts that keep us from seeing clearly. For that, there is grace as well.

Then we see Jesus doesn't leave him in his partial sight. He gives him perfect vision. Like him, there will be a day when we have perfect spiritual vision. Paul reveals this in 1 Corinthians 13. He says, **"For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then [we shall see him] face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known."** Paul has given us this amazing, hopeful statement.

There is coming a day when we will know God in the same way he knows us: perfectly. All the confusion, doubts, and dimness in our sin-stained hearts will be removed forever and completely, and we will know God intimately. This, I think, brings us to the final application, kind of in the form of a math equation. Here it is. This is the main idea today.

4. *God's power plus God's compassion equals everything you need.* There is no detail of your life that God doesn't care about. I'm going to ask you to close your eyes for a minute. We're talking about spiritual vision, spiritual sight. What's amazing is your eyes can be closed... Your physical eyes can be closed as you begin to see more clearly spiritually.

You might be willing to admit right here, right now, that there's so much that you still don't understand about God's love and power for your life. I can admit that. I hope you would too. Yet we can say together, "I love him. I know he has saved me, but there are still times in my everyday life that I wonder, 'Does God really care about this thing in my life?'"

I want to assure you, as your heads are bowed and your eyes are closed, his mission is to continually remove the darkness our sin causes him to doubt him with. I'm wondering if, right now, you might be moved to just pray, "Lord, help me to see." That is a prayer God loves to answer. "Help me to see you." I'm just going to give you a moment to pray that in your own words. "Lord, I want to see you more clearly. I want to understand. I want my spiritual eyes to be opened more." Just you and him right now.

With our heads still bowed, some of you in this room are in that group I mentioned, that group who are willfully determining you are not going to see it. You're not going to understand it. You've decided already, ahead of time, God cannot impress you. Yet it might be that God brought you here today because he loves you. All of a sudden, you have heard the truth again, your heart is beating a little faster right now, and you're realizing, "I can't deny it." The greatest sign you ever need is a cross.

You may be at the very point right now in your heart where you are willing to say, "God, I know I am a sinner, but I also know you are the Savior." You may be willing to pray something like, "I ask you to come into my life, cleanse me, and forgive me of my sin, rebellion, and resistance. I believe you died for me, rose from the dead, and live forever. I receive you as my Lord and Savior."

If those words are filling up your heart right now like air in a balloon, I just want you to just go to God in your own words and just say, "I believe. I'm a sinner. Forgive me and be my Savior and Lord," right now, just you and him.

God, thank you for your gracious patience in working tirelessly to open our spiritual eyes. In Jesus' name, amen.

If you prayed that prayer at the end and you just decided today, "That's it. I'm not denying him any longer. I'm not forsaking him anymore," we want to give you something to go home with today. It's a little starter kit. It has a Bible in it. It kind of helps you to just take some steps forward in your faith this week. You don't have to wait until next Sunday. You can start today. I hope you will just walk forward and say, "Hey, today I believed." That's all you have to say. "Today, I believed." We'll give you that.

I want to remind you that the concert this Wednesday night is our last one of the summer, and then if you didn't get a chance to fill out the form, volunteering for helping out with kids this fall, turn that in before you go. Somewhere out in the lobby, they'll be glad to get it from you. All right. God bless you. We'll see you next week.