

“Spiritual Vision” Mark 8:22-26

Today I want us to think about our Vision, not where we’re going in life or as a church, but our ability to see.

So many of us need a little help with our physical vision. Raise your hand, if that’s you! What about our online crowd? Let me see those hands. :)

Just last week I went to get my eyes checked. It’s been a while. It turns out that my vision is better, praise God! But my excitement was dulled when my Dr., Dr. I (as in the letter “I”, ironic I know - lol), when Dr. I told me that clearer sight was common for people my age, but she’d be talking to me about reading glasses before long. C’mon Doc, let me down easy next time!

But hey, I got my prescription, visited Martha at Wahby Pahkah, and got me some fresh, affordable specs coming in the mail. USPS don’t fail me now.

My question for you today is: How well do you see? Not physically... How well do you see supernaturally?

How is your spiritual vision?

Our story in Mark 8 today tells us about Jesus gives physical vision, but it provides a parabolic picture of our spiritual vision.

Mark 8:22-26 (text displayed)

SETTING:

- Jesus and his disciples finished rowing their boat back across the Sea of Galilee and came to Bethsaida, the home of Peter, Andrew, and Philip (see John 1:44, 12:21)
- It sits on the northeastern shore of Galilee’s Sea.

The Desperate Situation: A Man’s Blindness

Once again, Jesus is quickly met by people who want his attention. This time it is not ill-intentioned, arrogant religious leaders, but some humble people with a desperate need.

Verse 22 says, “And some people brought to him a blind man *and begged him* to touch him.”

- Like the paralyzed man in chapter 2 and the deaf man in chapter 7, it is friends who bring another friend to Jesus, which reminds us of our privilege as well! “Follow me, and I will make you fishers men.” (Mark 1:17)
- Clearly, these people are coming in faith. “Jesus, here’s our blind friend. We know God is with you. We know you have the power to heal. We know *all he needs* is a touch. Jesus, if you simply touch our friend (who has probably never seen anything in his life), and will see everything!”

- In our world of High Definition, Retina Displays, and 500 Megapixel Cameras on our Phones, we understand the value of seeing God's beautiful world with clarity. To not see clearly is increasingly annoying. To not see at all is one of life's greatest burdens.

T: The blind man was in a desperate situation, but Jesus brought...

The Hope of Deliverance: Jesus' Power to Heal

I love what Jesus does in *verse 23*. He takes the blind man by the hand and leads him out of the village. He treats the man with great care and compassion. In taking him away from the crowd, we see how Jesus not only serves the masses, he loves individual people. Psalm 139:18 says God's thoughts toward YOU are more than all the sand in the world. He knows you. He loves you!

Then Jesus spits in his eyes before he touches him and "laid his hands on him." Why did he do that? Was there power in his saliva? Was it a way to make the experience even more memorable?" We can't be sure, but we can know his power was working.

Jesus asked: "Do you see anything?" The man replied: "I see people, but they look like trees, walking." He probably sees his friends or Jesus' disciples. There is clearly progress but his sight is not yet fully restored.

Verse 25: "Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again..." God is the God of the Second Touch. Sometimes it's the second touch. Jesus works with us until he accomplishes his purpose. [["I am confident that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Christ Jesus." (Phil. 1:6)]]

Mark stacks up three expressions to emphasize the dramatic and perfect healing power of Jesus: "he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly."

This moment served as another confirmation that Jesus is the Messiah, the very Son of God. Isaiah 35 predicted it 700 years earlier: "*Say to those who have an anxious heart, "Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come.. the eyes of the blind shall be opened... For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert" (Isaiah 35:4-7a)*

And with every miracle and good deed, heaven touched earth. With every miracle Jesus displayed the coming kingdom of God! With every act of love Jesus was restoring shalom, the "*flourishing, wholeness and delight" God made us for in the beginning!*

T: But there is more going on in this story... and we'll miss it if we ignore what happens before and after the story.

As we reflect on this story, we should pay attention to the striking parallels with the healing of the deaf man in 7:31-37. It seems that Mark intentionally orders these stories to help us consider them together.

- They both have a group of people who bring their friend to Jesus (7:32; 8:22).
- They both "beg" Jesus to heal him with a touch (7:32; 8:22).

- Jesus takes each man away privately (7:33; 8:23).
- Jesus touches the impaired organ (7:33; 8:23).
- He actually uses his own spit each time (7:33; 8:23).
- And finally, after he heals them both, he tells them both to NOT spread the news (7:36; 8:26).

You say, “Okay, Pastor Tanner. They are similar. So what?” Where were Jesus and his disciples before they arrived in Bethsaida? That’s right. In the boat. What happened in the boat? They had a conversation about what? Their spiritual sight and spiritual hearing!

Look back at vv. 17-18. “Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear?” (Mark 8:17-18)

This is why scholars suggest this story is a parable of sorts. In other words, it provides an analogous picture of “the spiritual condition of the disciples.” Jesus healed the man in stages. His physical sight was progressively restored, and for the disciples, it’s not their physical sight but spiritual sight that is becoming clearer and clearer. We’ll see this more next week!

Like us, they grow through gradual illumination. Their ability to truly hear and truly see the reality of God’s kingdom and Jesus’ place as the King who came to save through his life, death, and resurrection is becoming clearer and clearer!

T: Mark is teaching us that we must...

The Point: Come to Jesus for clearer spiritual vision to see as he sees.

For starters, everyone must come to Jesus to receive spiritual vision! You say, how do I do that?

Receiving Spiritual Vision

Begins with hearing the truth of gospel, the good news about Jesus.

The Light of the Gospel: “Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God’s word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God. (2 Corinthians 4:1-2)

But there’s a problem. We have an enemy that wants to keep us from seeing, from truly understanding and receiving the truth of Jesus. I’m talking about...

Receiving Spiritual Vision

The Blinding Work of Satan: “And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” (2 Corinthians 4:3-4)

We'd be lost forever if not for...

Receiving Spiritual Vision

The Overpowering Light of Christ: "For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:5-6)

When God shines his light in our hearts, we understand why Jesus came and why that matters for us personally!

Call people to Christ. Receive sight today. Receive LIFE today.

Once we have spiritual eyes, we should to live with spiritual vision that is increasingly clear. How do we get clearer spiritual vision? Here are some encouragements!

Clearer Spiritual Vision

1. Seek his presence. (Psalm 36:9; John 8:12)

- Your perfect (20/20) vision cannot be activated without LIGHT.
- Without the gift of light, there is no gift of sight.
- Make space. We expect light but spend little time in the light of his presence.

2. Pray. Ask God! (Ephesians 1:15-18a)

- **"For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened." (Ephesians 1:15-18a)**
- Paul says, "There is seeing *and there is seeing*." Spiritual vision happens not with our physical eyes (retinas, and pupils, and) but with the eyes of our heart.

3. Immerse yourself in Scripture. (Psalm 119:105)

- "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."
- IMMERSE YOURSELF. We immerse ourselves in so many other things. I dare you to immerse yourself in the Bible and the things of God this summer and see what he does in your life! But it's not just knowledge, it's living it!

4. Pursue purity. (Matthew 5:8)

- "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will SEE GOD." (Matthew 5:8)
- Nothing will cloud your spiritual vision like SIN.
- Pastor Tanner, "I just can't see..." Check your heart. Evaluate your life. Confess any known sin. Turn back to God. He's waiting for you with his love.

5. Walk by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7)

- "We walk by faith, and not by sight." (2 Corinthians 5:7)
- Word and prayer. Live lives that require faith. Step out. Obey. Live with purity.

6. Live by the Spirit (Ephesians 1:15-18a)

- Once again, what did Paul say in Ephesians 1:15-18? **"For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus**

Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened.” (Ephesians 1:15-18a)

- Pentecost Sunday, every Sunday

Conclusion:

You say, Tanner, I'd like to see with spiritual vision, to see as Jesus sees, but how will I know? What does it look like to see as Christ sees?

Listen carefully... When Paul prays for spiritual vision, he requests three specific results...

“that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come (Ephesians 1:18b-21)

How well do you see the hope we have in Jesus, how well do you see what awaits you as a son or daughter of God with a glorious inheritance, and how clear is God's power, which is available to you! the same power...

To these we could ask ourselves...

- Do we see God clearly, not just when we worship or read the Bible, but throughout the day?
- Do we see others with eyes of love, from a spiritual point of view? (2 Corinthians 5:16)?
- Do we see ourselves like God sees us? Loved. Honored. Cherished. Enough!
- Are we seeing the brokenness and injustice with greater clarity?
- ... the reflections of his image and kingdom with greater clarity?
- Do we see our world and our experiences through the eyes of faith?
 - Where both opportunity and suffering are part of God's good purposes.
 - Where we see what God is doing and join him in that? John 5:19 “So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.”
- Do we see at times what others can't yet see because God is revealing his ways? (Go read 2 Kings 6 and the vision of Elisha...)
 - **[[When the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. And the servant said, “Alas, my master! What shall we do?” He said, “Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” Then Elisha prayed and said, “O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see.” So the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. (2 Kings 6:15-17)]]**

The closer you walk with Jesus, the clearer your vision. The clearer your vision, the more you will see everything like Jesus sees.

This morning I want to invite you to ask Jesus to touch the eyes of your heart! Ask Jesus for his second touch, that you would see clearer and clearer.

PRAY. MUSIC TEAM COMES OUT.