

Introduction

1. Do you wear glasses?
 - a. If not, then you are blessed. If you do, then you know how much you need them.
 - b. I wear glasses to help me read, but I don't need them to drive or for other activities.
 - c. Friends, whose eyesight is worse than mine, report that they often cannot recognize others clearly without their glasses. They can see them but not clearly.
 - d. In today's passage a man, Jesus performed His only two stage healing. His first touch allowed a man who was totally blind to see but not clearly. After a second touch, the man could see clearly.
2. James Brooks notes that this passage marks the beginning of the second major section of this gospel (Mk 8:22-10:52) which “. . . is the most carefully constructed and stands out the most clearly of the three. This is seen first in its introduction and conclusion with giving-of-sight stories (8:22-26; 10:46-52, respectively). These are the only miracles of healing blind persons in Mark's Gospel The first division ends with Mark's emphasis on the disciples' spiritual blindness (8:17-21). Near the beginning of the second, the disciples began to move toward an understanding of who Jesus is (8:27-30). Indeed, the enlightenment of the disciples is a major theme in the second division. Therefore the two miracles of restoration of physical sight function by suggesting the need of the disciples for spiritual insight and the ability of Jesus to cure their 'blindness.' Mark no doubt wanted his readers/hearers to identify with the disciples and acknowledge their need for spiritual perception. . . . The passion predictions [i.e., Mk 8:31, 9:31, 10:33-34] play a major role. They show what kind of Messiah (cf. 8:29) Jesus really is. He is a suffering and dying Messiah. The predictions prepare for the third major division, the passion narrative” (James A. Brooks, *Mark*, 131-32).
3. Let's investigate the important narrative of the healing of a blind man that marks the beginning of this new section of this gospel.
4. **Read Mk 8:22-26.**

A. Stage One (22-24)

1. Jesus and His disciples had just landed after another trip out on the Sea of Galilee.
 - a. In Mk 8:10, they had set sail from the eastern shore in the region of the Decapolis for Dalmanutha, whose location is uncertain but may be associated with Magdala on the western shore.
 - b. In Mk 8:11-12, immediately upon lading the boat, Jesus had a confrontational encounter with the Pharisees, who demanded a sign from heaven to validate His ministry.
 - c. In Mk 8:13, Jesus and His disciples made a hasty exit by boat after that confrontation as they “crossed to the other side” of the Sea of Galilee.
 - d. Mk 8:22 records, “They came to Bethsaida”
 - 1) If they launched from the region of Magdala on the western shore, the trip to Bethsaida, on the northeastern shore, was a short one.
 - 2) See the map for details on these locations.
 - 3) They had for the moment escaped from the demands of the Pharisees.
2. As we have become accustomed in this gospel, a crowd quickly formed wherever Jesus was.
 - a. People brought the sick and demon-possessed to Jesus for healing.
 - 1) Friends had brought a paralytic to Jesus for healing (Mk 2:3ff) and a deaf mute (Mk 7:32ff).
 - 2) Again here, “. . . some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him” (22)
 - 3) There is power in both the touch and words of Jesus, but healing did not come from His touch or His words but from the power of God in Him and the faith of those whom he healed.
 - b. Time and time again, Jesus fulfilled the joyous prophecy of Isaiah about the coming of Messiah: “Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy” (Isa 35:5-6a).



3. Jesus' disciples and many other people witnessed His miracles and heard His teaching.
 - a. However, did they really see, that is understand, who Jesus was?
 - b. Did they comprehend the true power and importance of all that He taught and did?
 - c. So far, it appears that they had not. They were still spiritually blind to the truth.
4. Jesus took the blind man "outside the village" (v. 23) for special attention just as He had done with the deaf mute earlier (cf., Mk 7:33).
 - a. Also, as he had done earlier with the deaf mute, Jesus took physical action in healing this blind man.
 - b. This healing involved spittle just as had been the case in the healing of the deaf mute earlier.
 - c. In healing the deaf mute, Jesus spat before touching the man's tongue.
 - d. This time, Jesus spat directly into the man's eyes before touching his eyes, but the healing was not complete at least not at first touch.
5. This is the only two-stage miracle that Jesus performed.
 - a. Normally, Jesus's words, His touch, or even touching Him was all it took for a person to be healed.
 - b. The blind man's sight was restored by Jesus' first touch but not completely.
 - c. The man reported that he could ". . . see people; they look like trees walking around" (24).
 - d. He had vision but it was distorted.

B. Stage Two (25-26)

1. Jesus' response to the man's comment about not seeing clearly was to "Once more put his hands on the man's eyes" (25a).
2. This second touch of the Master's hands gave the desired result as "his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly" (25b).
3. But why was a second touch required at all?
 - a. There was nothing deficient or defective in the first touch of Jesus.
 - b. This miracle was another teaching moment as Jesus through this physical miracle illustrated a spiritual truth about what was happening in the hearts of His disciples.
 - c. Sinclair Ferguson comments, "What is the significance of this? Was it that this man was a particularly 'difficult case' for Jesus? Hardly! Was this miracle then—like others—a sign? Yes! But to whom? To the man? No!—to the disciples. And this is confirmed by the fact that Jesus had already asked them about their vision of Him (v. 18). He was now leading them by the hand to the point at which their sight would become much clearer, and Peter would confess 'You are the Christ' (v. 29). Their spiritual understanding did not come instantaneously, but gradually. They too, needed the second touch from the hands of their Master" (Ferguson, *Mark*, 125).
4. Throughout Mark's narrative so far, the disciples have seemed blind to the reality of who Jesus is.
 - a. In spite of hearing His teaching and seeing His miracles, they have shown a shocking lack of faith.
 - b. They have shown fear in a storm, even when Jesus was in the boat with them (cf., Mk 4:35-41), and a second time when He came walking toward them on the water (cf., Mk 6:45-52).
 - c. They have not understood His parables and have had to have private tutorials to understand (cf., Mk 4:13-20; 7:17-23).
 - d. They appeared to have forgotten a previous miracle, the feeding of the five thousand, when confronted with a similar problem in the feeding of the four thousand (cf., Mk 8:1-13).
 - e. Their eyes have been so focused on physical realities that they have missed the spiritual realities right in front of them.
 - f. Jesus in last week's passage, had challenged them, "Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear?" (Mk 8:18)
 - 1) The disciples' spiritual eyes were opening slowly. They were beginning to see the spiritual truth of who Jesus is but not clearly just yet. They saw the truth but it was not yet in clear focus.
 - 2) This physical miracle of opening the blind eyes of the man in this passage precedes the spiritual miracle in the next passage (cf., Mk 8:27-30) in which the disciples' spiritually blind eyes begin to open to see Jesus for who He is—the son of God, Messiah.

5. After healing the man, Jesus told him to go home and “Don’t even go into the village.” (26)
 - a. As we have seen in the past, Jesus did not want to draw attention to Himself.
 - b. Warren Wiersbe commenting on Jesus’ command adds this insight—“The man was not from Bethsaida, for Jesus sent him home and cautioned him not to enter that town. Now that he had been healed, why go to unbelieving Bethsaida where Jesus had been rejected? . . . Should he not give another opportunity to the people in Bethsaida? Perhaps they would believe if they heard how Jesus had restored his sight. No, Bethsaida had been given adequate evidence, but still had refused to believe. It is a dangerous thing for anybody to reject the message of God and harden his or her heart in unbelief” (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Diligent*, 98).
 - c. The Messianic Secret would soon be revealed for all to see, but it is not yet time.
 - 1) There is more work to do in growing and preparing His disciples.
 - 2) We will see study a major milestone in the growth of the disciples in next week’s lesson.

C. Reflections

1. Like those first disciples, we are all on a journey of faith with Jesus through this life.
2. Where are you in your understanding of Jesus?
 - a. Are you spiritually blind to the truth of who He is and the eternal importance of your relationship with Him?
 - b. Have you begun to see Jesus for who He is but not clearly and completely just yet?
 - c. Do you see and understand that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God whom you must follow with wholehearted devotion?
 - d. Pray for God to open your eyes and deepen your faith.
 - e. Rejecting Jesus comes with an eternally high price.
3. We must see Jesus clearly for who He is, and once we see Him, we must follow Him faithfully and fearlessly wherever He leads us in life and ministry within His kingdom.
 - a. Pray for the Master to touch your spiritually blind eyes and to remove the foggiest of unbelief.
 - b. Pray for Him to give you full and clear spiritual eyesight to see the world and the needs of others as He does.
 - c. Pray for Jesus to give you courage and boldness to walk in this life with your spiritual eyes wide open so that you can respond as Jesus would in every situation.