

Valley Bible Church
Sermon Notes for April 9, 2017

Blind At Bethsaida
Mark 8:22-26

I. The approach (8:22)

22 And they came to Bethsaida. And some people brought to him a blind man and begged him to touch him.

- “And they came to Bethsaida”
 - Last time in Mark we saw Jesus rejecting the Pharisees and refusing to give them a sign in Magadan
 - After this brief rejection we saw Jesus’ rebuke the disciples on the boat ride to Bethsaida
 - This morning Jesus and the disciples arrive at Bethsaida, which was still Jewish territory like Magadan
- “And some people brought to him a blind man”
 - Similar scene to Mark 7:32 where an unidentified group of people brought a deaf and mute man to Jesus
 - Here we also have an unidentified group of people bringing a blind man to Jesus
 - We have seen all kinds of people being brought to Jesus so far in Mark
 - Mark 1:32 “That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons.”
 - Mark 2:3 “And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men.”
 - Mark 7:32 “And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hand on him.”
 - Jesus encountering a blind man is a first in the gospel of Mark
 - Jesus will encounter blind Bartimaeus in Mark 10
- “and begged him to touch him.”
 - This group knew the healing touch of Jesus
 - Jesus touched and healed the leper (Mark 1:41)
 - Jesus healed many, which had caused people to press around Him in order to touch Him (Mark 3:10)
 - Woman with discharge of blood for 12 years sought only to touch Jesus in order to be healed (Mark 5:24-34)
 - People laid sick before Him to touch even the fringe of His garment and He healed wherever He went (Mark 6:56)
 - Jesus touched the deaf-mute’s tongue in order to heal (Mark 7:33)

- So too these men were begging Jesus to administer His healing touch for this blind man, which would surely heal Him in their opinion
- Notice the attitude in which they came, “begging”
 - This has been a wonderful picture to see in Mark’s gospel
 - When people come begging Jesus to help, how does He respond?
 - If there was a time when Jesus might take out His anger on an innocent party, this might be it
 - He had just rejected the Pharisees for disrespecting Him
 - He had also just rebuked the disciples for not understanding who He was and the power He has, especially when it comes to bread
 - This seems like it could be a recipe for Jesus to be annoyed and done with people
 - But this group could not have approached Jesus in a better manner
 - Time and time again, Jesus can’t help but respond to the lowly in spirit
- This is still true of our Savior and God today
 - He delights to hear our requests (1 Peter 5:5; Philippians 4:6, etc.)
 - Do you even approach our Savior for help?
 - Are you self-sufficient in all your responsibilities?
 - Learn to become dependent upon God now, for He loves to listen and help
 - How is your attitude when you approach our Savior?
 - Do you beg for His mercy and grace?
 - Or have you become like the spoiled child expecting their parent to bend to their every will?

II. The first attempt (8:23-24)

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?” 24 And he looked up and said, “I see people, but they look like trees, walking.”

- Jesus responds positively to their begging as we already know
- Mark, being the only gospel writer to record this event, gives us vivid detail with how this miracle unfolds
- “And he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village”
 - Jesus took the blind man by the hand since it would be hard for this blind man to follow Jesus
 - Notice also that Jesus decided to lead the blind man out of the village
- Why is this?

- Jesus was compassionately connecting with the blind man personally in His encounter with him
 - The act of Jesus taking this man by the hand is similar to Jesus putting His thumbs in the ears of the deaf man in Mark 7
- Jesus was also avoiding the uncommitted crowds and unwanted hype over another miracle
- In fact, Jesus will actually condemn Chorazin, Capernaum and Bethsaida for their unbelief in the face of all His miraculous Messianic ministry
- Keep in mind that Jesus had just rejected the Pharisees as well
- Jesus was done with those who were done with Him (Pharisees, Bethsaida, etc.)
- However, in the midst of such Galilean unbelief and divine rejection, Jesus' compassion still remains and prompts Him to isolate this man and heal him
- "and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands on him"
 - These peculiar actions mirror the peculiar actions toward the deaf-mute in Mark 7
 - In Mark 7, Jesus spat and touched the man's tongue after putting His thumbs in his ears
 - Here, Jesus leads the man by the hand out of the town to spit on his eyes?!
 - This could be like John 9:6 where Jesus used His spit to make mud and anoint the blind man's eyes
 - Jesus laid His healing hands on this man like Jairus requested that Jesus lay His hands on his lifeless daughter and bring her back into the world
- "he asked him, 'Do you see anything?'"
 - This is not the normal occurrence in Jesus' miracles
 - Normally, Jesus speaks or touches and it is done!
 - This time, Jesus asks if this man sees anything
 - It is as if Jesus knows that this man's sight isn't fully functioning
- "And he looked up and said, 'I see people but they look like trees, walking.'"
 - What a strange response
 - This is progress since the formerly blind man now sees people
 - However, this man's vision of people is likened to trees, revealing how this man really cannot see in the normal way of seeing
 - This response and little detail may indicate that this man had sight at some point earlier in his life since he compares his vision of people to trees
 - Or not, he could have been born blind and simply compared people to trees in order to show the lack of detail and clarity in his vision

III. The second attempt (8:25)

Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.

- Jesus laid His healing hands on these man’s eyes once again
 - Mark uses a different word for “eyes” in this verse (ophthalmous)
- “and he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.”
 - Mark gives us a threefold repetition emphasizing this guy got his sight back
 - “he opened his eyes” (dieblepsen)
 - “his sight was restored” (apekatestei)
 - “and he saw everything clearly.” (eneblepen teilaugos apanta)
- This second attempt was clearly successful
- Why does Jesus perform this two-step miracle?
 - This account is only found in Mark
 - There does not appear to be another miracle in the gospels that took two steps
 - Maybe this miracle was particularly difficult and required more power from Jesus?
 - Is anything hard for God?
 - Perhaps this miracle was more than just a supernatural act but also a symbolic act regarding the spiritual vision of the disciples?
 - Jesus could be connecting this event to His rebuke of the disciples just prior to this in the boat “Having eyes do you not see?”
 - Jesus could also be setting the stage for the partial revelation that will come to the disciples evidenced by Peter in the next passage
 - The disciples will embrace that Jesus is the Messiah
 - But the disciples will need a second eye opening to embrace the mission of the Messiah in going to the cross
 - Aren’t the disciples still slow to learn throughout the rest of Mark’s gospel?
 - If Peter’s confession (8:29) shows stage one of spiritual blindness being healed, then what about Jesus rebuking Peter moments after his brilliant confession calling him to “Get behind me, Satan!” (8:33)
 - To say that this healing symbolically shows phase one in the disciples’ spiritual blindness being lifted is a stretch since they continue to be confused throughout the rest of Mark’s gospel
 - It really is not until after Jesus’ resurrection and ascension that the spiritual blindness is lifted
 - Perhaps it is best to let this miracle stand as a vivid and unique portrayal of Jesus’ power over the effects of the Fall
 - Jesus has healed in many ways (on the spot, from a distance, with instructions, etc.)
 - If the man lost his sight over time, why can’t Jesus gradually bring it back to show His power in this unique case for this specific person?

- We cannot forget the significance of such a miracle as healing the blind
 - Only God has such power to heal the blind
 - Psalm 146:7-9 “The LORD sets the prisoners free; 8 the LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous. 9 The LORD watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.”
 - Such a sign was indicative of the Messianic Age and Kingdom
 - Isaiah 29:18 “In that day the deaf shall hear the words of a book, and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see.”
 - Isaiah 35:5-6 “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; 6 then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert;”
- Mark is upholding his thesis in thorough fashion...
 - “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God...” (Mark 1:1)

IV. The admonition (8:26)

And he sent him to his home, saying, “Do not even enter the village.”

- This man may not have been from Bethsaida at all
 - He may have been brought by these men from some other town or city
 - Or he may have lived on the outskirts of the town
 - Jesus sends him home disallowing him to enter the village indicating that this man’s home probably was not even in the village
- The encounter ends with Jesus’ desire to be unnoticed
- As we have seen before, this is the humble nature of the ministry of our Savior
- Also, some point out that Jesus did not want to be known or remembered for miracles
- Instead, Jesus wanted His disciples and others to wait until He finished His greatest work on the cross before they began preaching about Jesus