

Lake Cities Community Church
Pastor Craig Schill
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Series: On Your Mark

“20/20 Vision”
(Mark 8:1-26)

In grade school we were all taught the five senses: touch, taste, smell, hearing, sight? And you may have asked this question: “If you had to lose one of the five; if that were a requirement – which one would it be?” Taste? Smell? Hearing? Sight?

Your answers are likely similar to those found on various web polls that have asked this same question. Some comments were left on one site. One person said: “I was listening to the radio in the car, and then I thought about what it would be like to be deaf. To not be able to listen to music anymore - I'd be devastated. I think if I had to give one up it would be the sense to smell.” Several agreed that smell was optional: “Smell is just a pleasantry”. One person said, “I'd give up sense of smell, because sometimes life stinks!” However sacrificing taste was also popular. A woman wrote: “I've battled my weight all my life and not having a sense of taste could work to my advantage.” One person tried to sum up what most people felt: “The ability to touch, see, and hear are definitely out of the question, and I think everyone will agree with that. With the three of those being eliminated it all narrows down to two senses, which is smell and taste.”

And I believe if you took such a poll 2,000 years ago the answers would be pretty much the same; because in the ancient world you may be able to cope with not smelling or tasting – but to be deaf and blind meant a life of extreme difficulty. In fact our passage

today is going to warn us to not give up our sight. Jesus will teach us about what it truly means to see and to be blind – physical sight and spiritual insight.

Preview: In our passage we have four stories (1) the feeding of the 4,000, (2) an interaction with the Pharisees, (3) crossing the Sea of Galilee and (4) healing of a blind man. But we are going to take the stories out of order, (1) starting with the healing of the blind man, (2) then the interaction with the Pharisees, (3) followed by feeding of the 4,000 and finally the (4) crossing of the Sea of Galilee. The reason for this, is so we start with the end in mind. The healing of the blind man, I believe is intentionally placed after the other three stories, because it sums them up. Once we have the conclusion, we will work to reconstruct the arguments and therein find practical lessons for each of us. All right? Let's begin with the blind man.

(1) Twice Healed Blind Man (22-26)

Mark 8:22 And they came to Bethsaida. And they brought a blind man to Jesus and implored Him to touch him. Mark 8:23 Taking the blind man by the hand, He brought him out of the village; and after spitting on his eyes and laying His hands on him, He asked him, "Do you see anything?" Mark 8:24 And he looked up and said, "I see men, for I see *them* like trees, walking around." Mark 8:25 Then again He laid His hands on his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and *began* to see everything clearly. Mark 8:26 And He sent him to his home, saying, "Do not even enter the village."

What is unusual about this miracle is of course the two stages of healing. The man moves from being completely blind to having partial sight (phase one), and then from fuzzy sight to clear sight (phase two). And the question always comes up – "Why?" What is the

reason for the two phases? Was it that this was a particularly hard miracle, that Jesus didn't get quite right the first time. Like taking a cake out of the oven and finding goo on the toothpick – you realized it has not cooked long enough, so you reset the timer. Was the blindness stubborn? I don't think so.

From the context, I am going to argue that Jesus is not only healing a blind man but teaching a spiritual lesson. The movement of the miracle - parallels our own spiritual growth. We begin blind as a bat. Spiritually this is called unbelief. Then we encounter Jesus and we begin a life of faith – growing spiritually. We our eyesight is not perfect. We we see through a mirror dimly (1 Cor 13:12). We live by faith and not by sight (2 Cor 5:7). But we are growing toward more and more toward 20/20 spiritual vision. Eventually, all things will become clear. Sometimes we attain a measure of clarity in this life, but most of it is reserved for the next life, because the reality of the matter is that there are many thing we will never quite understand on this side of heaven.

(2) Spiritually Blind – Pharisees (10-13)

Now, the second story – look with me at the Pharisees. The Pharisees represent those who are spiritually blind – they represent unbelief. Look at verses 10-13, [Mark 8:10](#) **And immediately He entered the boat with His disciples and came to the district of Dalmanutha. [Mark 8:11](#) The Pharisees came out and began to argue with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, to test Him. [Mark 8:12](#) Sighing deeply in His spirit, He said, “Why does this generation seek for a sign? Truly I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation.”**

My first reaction to this story is to be hard on Jesus? Why doesn't He give them what they ask for? If he did a miracle right then - they will have to believe, wouldn't they? The answer is "no." Miracles seldom translate into trust. The Pharisees have already seen a heap of miracles, yet they have no faith; one more miracle will not make a difference for them. And furthermore, we have learned in the book of Mark is that where there is no faith, Jesus will not act. Jesus is not a performing monkey. He is not a spiritual vending machine. In chapter 6, recall Jesus went back to his hometown in Nazareth, but because of their lack of faith he did no miracle there. They Pharisees are spiritually blind. Jesus in front of them, but they do not see him. Matthew says: [Matt. 15:14](#) "Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit." The spiritually blind person may know who Jesus is, may have gone to church all their life, have read their Bibles, even had a vision of the Lord – yet their physical sight has not led to spiritual insight. Knowledge has not translated into belief.

(3) Partial Sight – Disciples (1-9)

We move spiritually from unbelief, to partial sight to full sight. The Pharisees represent spiritual blindness. They refuse to believe that Jesus is who He claims to be. Now our third story – the disciples. They represent fuzzy vision. They have encountered Jesus. They have some faith in Him – yet they are largely in the dark, in a fog. I would suggest that they represent most of us here this morning. We have faith in Christ, but are not quick to understand all that is going on in our lives. We struggle with our faith in Him, and even sometimes slide toward unbelief. The question for the disciples (and you and I) is will we grow toward spiritual 20/20 vision, or will we slide back toward unbelief?

Look at the feeding of the 4,000. [Mark 8:1](#) In those days, when there was again a large crowd and they had nothing to eat Jesus called His disciples and said to them, [Mark 8:2](#) “I feel compassion for the people because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat. [Mark 8:3](#) “If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way; and some of them have come from a great distance.” [Mark 8:4](#) And His disciples answered Him, “No problem Lord, we saw you feed 5,000 with 5 loaves and 2 fish – so this should be a piece of cake?” No that is not what they said! “Where will anyone be able to find enough bread here in *this* desolate place to satisfy these people?”

And we wonder - “How in the world could they respond this way after seeing Jesus feed the 5,000?” The answer is that they could do it just as well as the Pharisees who ask for sign even though they have seen many signs before. The point of this story is to show how the disciples are nearly as blind as the Pharisees. David Garland comments: “The disciples are slow on the uptake and grope for answers in the dark” (Garland, 307). Jesus is trying to get them to grow spiritually – toward greater vision and clarity. So Jesus feeds the 4,000 (v 5-9) and we move to the last story – they set out across the Sea of Galilee.

(4) Lesson – Sea of Galilee (13-21)

[Mark 8:13](#) Leaving them, (that is the Pharisees) He again embarked and went away to the other side. [Mark 8:14](#) And they had forgotten to take bread, and did not have more than one loaf in the boat with them. [Mark 8:15](#) And He was giving orders to them, saying, “Watch out! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.” [Mark 8:16](#) They *began* to discuss with one another *the fact* that they had no bread.

I am not exaggerating to say that this is exactly like a ride in the Schill family car. You can visualize me as the great spiritual leader trying to impart a deep spiritual lesson to the children: "Behold this is how to behave when we get to our destination. Say this. Do not say that. Eat whatever you are served." But no one is listening. Why? Because they are all fighting over the one Oreo cookie that someone brought into the car and is waving around for all to see!" I love David Garland's quote: "The scene is almost comical. Jesus has fed nine thousand people with next to nothing...and though they have had ringside seats, it has apparently slipped their minds, and they come off as dunderheads, worrying about not having enough to fix lunch for 13" (Garland, 311).

Do you see what is going on? Jesus is worried that instead of growing toward 20/20 vision and greater spiritual maturity, they are going to slip down into spiritual blindness – like the Pharisees. What the Pharisees and Herod have in common (the only thing) is unbelief. The leaven of the Pharisees and Herod could easily infect them so that they will become like them – plunged into spiritual darkness. [Mark 8:17](#) Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you discuss *the fact* that you have no bread? Do you not yet see or understand? Do you have a hardened heart? [Mark 8:18](#) "HAVING EYES, DO YOU NOT SEE? AND HAVING EARS, DO YOU NOT HEAR? And do you not remember. [Mark 8:19](#) when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces you picked up?" They said to Him, "Twelve." [Mark 8:20](#) "When *I broke* the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of broken pieces did you pick up?" And they said to Him, "Seven." [Mark 8:21](#) And He was saying to them, "Do you not yet understand?"

You see, Jesus is trying to stop their slide toward spiritual darkness and push them toward greater clarity. Do you remember the 5,000? The 4,000? The baskets? Yes. Yes. Yes. Ok. Let's go over all of it again and again and again. Jesus is saying: *Remember what I did for you back then – so that you can trust me to take of you now.*

Conclusion / Application

Here is the conclusion of the matter – what I believe we are being taught in this passage: **Remember God's work, so that you may grow in your faith, away from spiritual blindness, toward spiritual 20/20 vision.**

From 1995 to 2000 China was marketing a weapon called the ZM-87 that uses pulsating laser beams with the purpose of causing temporary or permanent blindness in enemy soldiers. It had a range of two miles – just pull the trigger and instant blindness. It was banned by the United Nations as being too cruel for warfare. Satan wants nothing more than to blind you and I in the spiritual war that rages. The world and our own sin nature conspire to help in the process.

I wonder if there is someone here this morning who is in spiritual darkness. Maybe you have gone to church all your life, yet you know that you do not believe. Or there may be a person who has believed but now is slipping in their faith. You honestly don't believe like you used to. If Jesus were to speak to you this morning, I believe He would say what he said to the disciples. "Remember! Think back and remember – how I protected you, and provided for you. Remember when I walked with you through a difficult trail. Remember what I have done for you in the past so that you might have a renewed faith today for what you are going through right now." As the old hymns says: "*Count your blessings name them*

one by one. Count your blessing see what God has done. Count your blessings...and it may surprise you what the Lord has done!" Beloved stop your slide toward unbelief by moving your memories of Jesus' faithfulness to trust today. Jesus wants to push you away from spiritual blindness toward 20/20 vision.

But someone might say – my memories are not all that good. God didn't stop that drunk driver. Jesus didn't heal my loved one of cancer. I have not been shielded from pain. Where was God through all the tragedies of my life? I want to end by reminding all of us that *while we can attain some measure spiritual sight – we still see as through a dim mirror. There are many things that don't and perhaps can't make sense until we go home to be with the Lord.* But we trust that He is working all things out to the good of those who are called by His name. We trust in the great promises of Scripture: that justice for the wicked and rewards for the godly will happen and all that is wrong will be set right – that one day we will see clearly.

I will end with this story. Like Fanny Crosby, Adam Geibel's was a blind composer, having contracted an eye disease at age 8. He enjoyed success in writing both popular secular songs, as well as hymns. He was married and had children.

When his daughter grew up she married a young godly college graduate. He worked for a steel company in the molten metal department. He was to be given time off to take his new wife to the seashore on a Good Friday, and they were going to spend Easter there. But the man who was suppose to fill in for him fell through, and the son-in-law had to work Friday and Saturday. But he did so with a good attitude and their plans were adjusted accordingly. That Good Friday, as the great conveyor full of molten metal moved across the

room, something gave way. Tons of white hot metal spilled out and flew in all directions. Three men were killed outright. The son-in-law was fatally injured and eventually died.

The daughter was understandably devastated. And the only thing worse than a child in pain, is the pain of a parent watching their child in pain. Geibel was angry. He just could not understand why God would allow such a thing to happen, and he slipped into despair and depression. He was sliding toward unbelief. But then one day, God in His grace, spoke to his heart through the great promises of Scripture. God said to Him: "Some day you will understand, some day you will see plainly." And that truth stopped his slide toward unbelief and he was strengthened in his faith. Geibel wrote of his experience in a hymn that was popular at the time, but I would guess most of you have never heard of called,

Some Day He'll Make it Plain

*I do not know why oft around me
My hopes all shattered seem to be
God's perfect plan I cannot see
But some day I'll understand
Some day He'll make it plain to me
Some day when I His face shall see.
Some day from tears I shall be free
For some day I shall understand.*

*Tho' trials come thro' passing days
My life will still be filled with praise;
For God will lead thro' darkened ways
But some day I'll understand.
Some day He'll make it plain to me,
Some day when I His face shall see
Some day from tears I shall be free
For some day I shall understand.*