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Sermon Notes

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Healed in Stages to See More Clearly

Mark 8:22-26

I. An Unusual Miracle

This is truly a remarkable miracle! Unique in a very powerful way...

Mark 8:22-25 They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. ²³ He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?" ²⁴ He looked up and said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around." ²⁵ Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.

A. Jesus' Power Seemed to Flicker and... Dare I Say It... to Fail?!

It is the only time in which it seems that Jesus' miraculous healing power did not work properly the first time. Like somehow Jesus made a mistake and needed to try again.

B. Remember the Instantaneous Nature of All of Jesus' Miracles

1. Mark 1: The leper was healed instantly by a touch
2. Mark 2: The paralyzed man was healed instantly and got up and walked out
3. Mark 4: When he said "Peace, be still!" to the raging hurricane on the Sea of Galilee, instantly the wind and the waves were calm and quiet

4. Mark 5: When he commanded the Legion of demons to leave the wretched demoniac of the Gadarenes, instantly thousands of demons fled this man and entered the herd of pigs
5. Mark 5: When the woman who had been bleeding for twelve years touched the hem of his garment, instantly the bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering
6. Mark 5: When Jesus took Jairus's dead daughter by the hand, instantly life returned to her and she was completely healed, just needing some food
7. Mark 7: Best of all, when the Syro-Phoenician mother answered Jesus' humbly and with faith, "Yes, Lord, but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the master's table" Jesus said "For such a reply you may go... the demon has left your daughter!"
INSTANTLY! Effortlessly!!

C. Remember the Worship After the Deaf-Mute Was Healed

Mark 7:37 People were overwhelmed with amazement. "He has done everything well," they said.

D. So... What Happened Here???

II. A Man Healed in Stages

Mark 8:22-25 They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. ²³ He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?" ²⁴ He looked up and said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around." ²⁵ Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.

A. Bethsaida

1. The hometown of Peter, Andrew, Philip, and possibly Nathaniel
2. Near where Jesus fed the 5000... almost certainly many of these people had been miraculously fed by Jesus that day

B. Blindness

1. Blindness was tragically common back then
2. Jesus healed many blind people throughout his ministry
3. Blind people were obviously in great distress and many of them ultimately had to resort to begging in order to survive

C. Friends Interceding for this Man

1. Some friends bring this blind man to Jesus and beg on his behalf for him to heal him
2. This is a beautiful picture of intercession... like the four friends that brought the paralyzed man to Jesus and dug through the roof
3. These friends didn't have to work so hard, but their love is obvious
4. Teachable moment: intercessory prayer for the salvation of a lost friend, neighbor, coworker or relative... who are you bringing to Jesus and begging him to open the eyes of their hearts to see in Jesus their savior??

D. Jesus' Healing

1. Jesus takes this blind man by the hand and leads him outside the village
2. He spits... using his saliva to heal his blind eyes
3. He will do the same in John 9 with the man born blind... he spat on the ground and made mud and wiped it in the man's blind eyes; he washed the mud off and then could see
4. In this case, Jesus spits directly into his eyes and asks what he can see
5. Then the man gives this amazing statement:

Mark 8:24 "I see people; they look like trees walking around."

6. Some sight has been restored... but it is not clear; people do not look like trees... so his vision is working, but its fuzzy, not clear, not distinct... it's not reality, but it's better than it was

7. This is directly contrasted with the final outcome

Mark 8:25 Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.

8. Seeing things as they actually are... no longer fuzzy or blurry or distorted

E. The Command About the Village

1. Jesus pulled the man outside the village to heal him

2. After the healing, he commands him not to return to the village

Mark 8:26 And he sent him to his home, saying, "Do not even enter the village."

3. This may be like all the other commands not to tell anyone... to keep the crowds from becoming too excited and out of control

4. BUT some scholars believe it may be an act of judgment by Jesus... they had had many miracles by this time, and Jesus was no longer going to bless them with more evidence of his greatness

Matthew 11:21-22 "Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. ²² But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you.

III. The Salvation Analogy: Physical and Spiritual Healing

A. So... Why the Two-Step Healing?

1. Well, it's not because Jesus was having a bad day!

2. It's not because he failed the first time and needed to try again

3. Mark 7: "Jesus has done everything well!!" So also this

4. Everything Jesus did was for a purpose!
5. My concept... Jesus was picturing that our spiritual healing... our salvation... also comes in stages

B. Jesus Gives Us Permission to Link Physical Healing with Spiritual

1. Isaiah 53

Isaiah 53:5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

2. Luke 5

Luke 5:31-32 Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ³² I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

3. John 9

John 9:39-41 Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind." ⁴⁰ Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, "What? Are we blind too?" ⁴¹ Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains

The concept of spiritual sight is powerful here... Jesus heals a physically blind man, but likens it to spiritual healing. Spiritual blindness is openly displayed by the Pharisees who cannot see the plain reality that Jesus is God in the flesh, come into the world to save us from sin. This man born blind DOES see spiritually:

John 9:35-38 Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" ³⁶ "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him." ³⁷ Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." ³⁸ Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him.

C. Thus We Have Every Right to See All the Physical Healings As
PICTURES of our Spiritual Healing... our Salvation

D. Therefore... this healing is also a picture... our salvation, like this
man's eyesight, comes to us in stages

IV. Saved in Stages

A. Our Salvation Comes to Us in Stages

1. Salvation is PAST: We "have been saved"

***Ephesians 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--
and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- ⁹ not by works, so
that no one can boast.***

2. Salvation is PRESENT: "We are being saved"

***1 Corinthians 1:18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those
who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of
God.***

3. Salvation is FUTURE: "We will be saved"

***Romans 5:9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much
more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!***

B. Justification

1. Instantaneous salvation from the penalty of all of our sins, past,
present and future

2. Declared righteous by God by faith

3. Our sins imputed to Christ and he paid their penalty in full; we are
TOTALLY FORGIVEN

***Ephesians 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the
forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace***

4. Christ's righteousness imputed to us instantly and we are seen by
God in Christ as perfectly righteous

5. That happens the moment we first trust in Christ... and it can never be taken away from us...
6. At that moment, we are born again, made alive spiritually, adopted into the family of God as sons and daughters of the living God
7. Instantaneous justification... but our salvation is not yet complete

C. Sanctification

1. Progressive growth into Christlikeness...
2. Positively: thinking more and more like Christ; loving more and more like Christ; acting more and more like Christ... transformed by the renewing of our minds
3. Negatively: putting sin to death by the Spirit... throwing off old habits and killing them by starving them

Ephesians 4:17-24 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. ¹⁹ Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. ²⁰ You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. ²¹ Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. ²² You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³ to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

4. Romans 6 teaches sanctification most plainly:

Romans 6:3-8 all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. ⁵ ¶ If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. ⁶ For we know

that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin--⁷ because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

Spiritual union with Christ means positionally dead to sin forever... and positionally resurrected and alive with Christ forever. We are then called on to live that out day by day.

The progressive nature of this is plain in Romans 6 as well:

Romans 6:19 I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.

5. Gradually becoming more and more conformed to Christ... old pattern was “ever-increasing wickedness”; new pattern is “ever-increasing holiness”

6. This is progressive sanctification...

7. So, Paul commands the Philippians

Philippians 2:12-13 continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling,¹³ for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

8. For the rest of our lives, we are commanded by God and empowered by the indwelling Holy Spirit to grow more and more in Christlikeness

2 Peter 3:18 grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

9. I will come back to this topic in a moment

D. Glorification

1. This is the final stage of salvation

2. It occurs in two stages as well, unless we are alive at the Second Coming of Christ

3. First, at death, the soul of the Christian is separated from the mortal body... the body goes to corruption in the grave; the spirit goes into the presence of the Lord and is instantly and perfectly conformed to Christ forever

Hebrews 12:23 the spirits of righteous men made perfect

4. At the resurrection from the dead, the body is raised in glory, totally perfect, conformed forever to Christ's glorious resurrection body

Philippians 3:21 by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body

All three of these stages are essential parts of our salvation...

The Bible is very clear about this!

We do not get all our salvation all at once

Therefore, the healing of the blind man in stages could very well picture our salvation as well!

V. Ever-Increasing Spiritual Sight

A. The SIGHT of the Blind Man Represents Spiritual Sight

B. Faith is the Eyesight of the Soul

1. Faith is often represented as a kind of sight

2 Corinthians 5:7 for we walk by faith, not by sight.

2. Hebrews 11, the faith chapter, likens faith to sight

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Hebrews 11:27 By faith [Moses] left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.

3. Ephesians 1:18 speaks of “the eyes of the heart”... and the best understanding of that is faith... by faith we see invisible spiritual realities, past, present, and future
4. Physical eyesight shows us physical reality... the lay of the land, a dangerous ditch, how the road curves—whether left or right

Luke 6:39 "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?"

John 11:9-10 Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? A man who walks by day will not stumble, for he sees by this world's light. ¹⁰ It is when he walks by night that he stumbles, for he has no light.

5. So spiritual reality is made plain to us by faith alone...by faith we more clearly see things in the invisible spiritual realms as they really are

C. Faith Can Be Weak or Strong

1. Jesus frequently commented on the level of people's faith
2. Positively:

[About the Roman centurion] ***Matthew 8:10 When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.***

[About the Syro-Phoenician woman] ***Matthew 15:28 Then Jesus answered, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted."***

3. Negatively:

[About Peter] ***Matthew 14:31 "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"***

And repeatedly he called his disciples “You of little faith...”

4. Therefore, it seems vital for us to increase in faith... for our faith to grow and get stronger

2 Thessalonians 1:3 We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing.

2 Corinthians 10:15 Our hope is that, as your faith continues to grow, our area of activity among you will greatly expand

D. Stronger Faith Must Therefore Mean Clearer Spiritual Vision

1. To see invisible spiritual realities more and more clearly and vividly
2. This happens by a combination of bible intake, prayer, the Spirit's work in us, repentance, and obedience
 - a. Simply put... for clearer spiritual eyesight... GET IN THE WORD... read it, meditate on it, saturate your mind in it; pray as you do... repent of whatever sins it shows you in your life, obey whatever the Spirit tells you to do... and you will see things more and more clearly

John 14:21 Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.

E. Specific Areas of Spiritual Vision

1. See the agonies of Christ's death

Galatians 3:1 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.

"When I survey the wondrous cross..."

See displayed in the cross the love of God, the power of God, the wisdom of God, the justice of God, the wrath of God ... all the perfections are there if you meditate deeply and scripturally on the cross... SEE IT... brothers and sisters; see the agonies of Christ, see the love of Christ, see all of it DAILY

2. See the glory of Christ's resurrection

2 Corinthians 3:18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Christ's resurrection glory is our glory; his resurrection body is promised to us... and the more we see that glory, the more we are transformed into that glory

3. See greatness of Christ's kingly power at work for you

Ephesians 1:18-23 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, ²⁰ which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²² And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Simple words... I pray that you could see how majestic Christ is at the right hand of God, ruling over all the events of earth for the benefit of his church:

Hebrews 2:9 we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor....

Hebrews 12:2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

4. See the vileness and details of your own sin

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

The Greek word there means "reproof or rebuke for sin"... displaying the evidence of sin to a person

It is by faith alone that we see our sin for what it really is; this is the inner work of the Holy Spirit in us – increasingly to make us aware of the corruptions of our hearts... the hidden evils within us.

5. See the lostness of people around you

John 4:35 Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.

The command to “open your eyes and look at the fields” has to do with LOST PEOPLE... in that chapter, the Samaritan village they had just been in buying food for lunch; they did not see the lostness of the people and did not care about their condition

The stronger our faith, the more we will see the true spiritual condition of people around us

6. See needy people around you

Luke 10:31-33 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him.

This is similar to the last one... seeing needy people with eyes of faith and love, not with merely physical eyes. The Good Samaritan saw this beaten up man differently than the priest and Levite.

7. See the brevity of your life

Psalm 39:4 "Show me, O LORD, my life's end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting is my life.

Psalm 90:12 Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

8. See the vanity of this world

Matthew 24:2 "Do you see all these things?" he asked. "I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."

9. See the reality of the coming Judgment Day

2 Peter 3:10-12 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. ¹¹Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives ¹²as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.

10. See the glories of heaven

2 Peter 3:13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

VI. Our Eternal Destination: Perfect Heavenly Vision

1 Corinthians 13:12 Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

1 John 3:2-3 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. ³ Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.

Revelation 22:3-4 The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

When we are in heaven, we will no longer need faith... our faith will be perfect sight. We will see the face of God, drinking in his glory. Our whole resurrection bodies will be filled with the light of the glory of God. Our vision of the new creation will be perfect and we will see everything clearly as it really is.