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*TEACHING THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD*

# Mark - Lesson 8C

## Chapter 8:22-26

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- Tonight, we arrive to one of the climatic points of Mark’s account – the healing of the blind man of Bethsaida.
  - You will find that Mark’s gospel is the only gospel record with this healing in it and we will see why this healing is so “Markan”.
    - What we have encountered up to this point, as a quick summary, is there is a growing rejection of Messiah from the religious leaders.
  - We mentioned that the failure of seeing who Jesus truly was, was rooted in the religious leaders instructing in the “commands of men” versus “the commands of God.”
    - The teaching of that time was centered in and upon what we have noted as Pharisaic Judaism. (The Oral Law)
    - This was a conglomerate of additional rules, obstacles, and manipulated interpretations of the Hebrew Scriptures taught as “authoritative”.
  - Therefore, the commands of God were not taught by the leaders of that day.
    - Jesus, if you remember, spoke of the religious leader’s rejection of God’s instructions in Mark 7:9.

**Mark 7:9 He was also saying to them, “You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition.**

- ◦ Ultimately, the disregard of teaching God’s commands and instructions was rooted in the wicked hearts of these men, as they were blinded to truth.
- You may recall in Mark 7, Jesus and His disciples are confronted by the Pharisees for their failure in abiding by these “man-made” rules.
  - And Jesus calls these men out. Turn quickly to Mark 7:6-7:

**Mark 7:6 And He said to them, “Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written:**

**‘This people honors Me with their lips,  
But their heart is far away from Me.**

**Mark 7:7 ‘But in vain do they worship Me,  
Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.’**

- So Jesus makes known to the crowd, His disciples, and the Pharisees that the things you say or do doesn’t make one right with a Holy God.
  - But rather, their hearts needed to be made anew. This is a work that only Sovereign God can do from the inside out.
  - So this has been our build up thus far: Man must encounter Divine illumination to see that one must be made right internally to receive the Kingdom.
  - Then we witnessed Jesus’ warning to His disciples regarding their hardened hearts which we came to understand in this context simply meant “lack of understanding”.
    - To put it plainly, the disciples, although they had faith in Christ, did not fully

comprehend His Identity and purpose regarding His mission.

- Well that begs a question: “How could it be that the disciples have been walking with the Messiah for the time they were with Him yet still miss the truth of His purpose and first coming?
  - It would seem as if they were somehow blinded to this reality and needed clarity on the matter.
- We then came to find out that this blindness of who Jesus is, from the people, was reinforced by the misunderstandings of the identity of the Messiah by the religious leaders.
  - They were expecting a conquering King who would overtake the Roman government and free them from political oppression.
  - The Pharisees were anticipating a Messiah who would endorse their Pharisaical teachings of the Mishnah.
  - Yet no one was anticipating a Messiah who would come to die for the sake of the sins of the people (Isaiah 53/Psalm 22) – what they truly needed, what humanity needed.
- Therefore, Jesus attributes the blindness of the people to what He describes as the “Leaven of the Pharisees” and the “Leaven of Herod”.
  - If you want more details regarding the particulars of the Leaven, I encourage you to watch or listen to our Mark 8B teaching.
  - Due to time, I will summarize what we learned from the leavens mentioned:
- We saw that the “Leaven of the Pharisees and Herod” were rooted in wrong teaching, hypocrisy, and self-righteousness, all under the guise of Pharisaic Judaism.
  - So with these power systems at play, governmentally, religiously, and superficially, what was required for the people to do upon encountering Jesus’ ministry was: completely abandon what they knew.
  - The people had to abandon the teachings and instructions of the Pharisees which were leading them further from the truth and they needed to turn to the Truth found in Christ and His teaching.
- This ability to turn to truth was in fact the message in which Jesus has been talking about for some time in the Galilee region.
  - And that message was that man needed to “Repent and Believe in the Gospel”
  - In other words, turn away from Pharisaic Judaism and this path of self-righteousness and receive the Kingdom by faith and not by works.
- This turning from one thing to another is what we understand as Repentance: Repentance is a change of mind or change of perspective about what one has taught.
  - The old must be abandoned and the new must be embraced. Plainly put: They must choose to embrace the Messiah in whom has made Himself known, plainly.
  - But as we have witnessed time and time again, some are responding in faith while others are rejecting even with seeing the evidence before them.
- And although the disciples have been walking with Jesus, their ability to see Christ

most clearly is, at this point, a bit dim or blurry if you will.

- So what we will see in this particular healing, which is unique to Mark's account, will be a foreshadowing as to how Christ will bring clarity to His identity and His purpose in His first coming.
- If I were to put a tag on tonight's text it would be: "Was blind, but now I see"
  - And what we will see tonight is how God takes unable, unqualified, broken men and women and brings them to see clearly who He is.
  - With that being said, I invite you to open up your bibles and meet me in Mark 8:22-26.

**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."

- Let's Pray.

**Mark 8:22** And they \*came to Bethsaida. And they \*brought a blind man to Jesus and \*implored Him to touch him.

- Well it's here that Mark records, after Jesus and the disciples' hostile encounter with the Pharisees and Sadducees in Dalmanutha, that they arrive to a town called Bethsaida.
  - If you remember, it was on this boat ride to Bethsaida that Jesus warns His disciples about being aware of the "Leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod."
    - This detail will be key as we witness the healing of the blind man at Bethsaida later tonight.
  - Now, Bethsaida was a town on the northern shores of the Galilee and was the home of Philip, Andrew, and Peter.
    - The name Bethsaida means "house of the fisher," and it's no surprise that the chief industry there was fishing.
  - It was in and around the area of Bethsaida that Jesus had performed several miracles for the people to witness for the means of seeing His Identity and Purpose.
    - Of these miracles performed were:
      - 1. Jesus walking on the water in Mark 6:42-52.
      - 2. The Feeding of the 5,000 which took place near the district of Bethsaida

in Luke 9:10-17.

- 3. And lastly, the healing of the blind man which we will be covering tonight.
- What's even more telling about the village of Bethsaida is they had quite an interesting encounter with Jesus' teaching ministry, along with 2 other cities.
  - We find in Matthew's gospel (Mt.11:21-24), that Jesus pronounced woe or judgment upon several cities for their unbelief and unrepentant hearts.
  - With the many miracles and signs performed in those cities, like the Pharisees, the people refused to see. Check out what Matthew 11:21-24 says:

**Matthew 11:21** “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

**Matthew 11:22** Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you.

**Matthew 11:23** And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day.

**Matthew 11:24** Nevertheless I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you.”

- So Matthew's account tells us that Bethsaida, Capernaum, and Chorazin were denounced and condemned for not repenting, having visibly seen the miraculous signs of God through His Messiah.
  - And in a way, this was the frustration in which Jesus makes known about the Pharisees as well as His own disciples.
  - We see the big issue come to a head in Mark 8:17-18. This is what the text reads:

**Mark 8:17** And 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,

- Although the disciples had eyes to see, in a sense, because they walked with Jesus and were explained His many parables, they still didn't fully realize His true identity and purpose regarding His mission.
  - This lack of the disciples' spiritual awareness was caused by much misinformation about the Christ and what He would come to do.
  - As we discussed in prior teaching, with false messiahs that had come and Pharisaic Judaism that was on the rise, clarity had to be brought to make known who Christ truly was – and this would be a gradual feat.
  - These selected men would need to know, very clearly, the purpose of Jesus' mission and what He came to do.

- And it was only Jesus who could provide that clarity and that insight needed to see Him in His fulness of His Person and work.
- The disciples' reliance on what they thought they knew about Jesus or what they heard from others about Him had to be re-evaluated based upon what Jesus was showing them.
  - And friends, this becomes a crucial point to recognize as we minister and share the gospel with others.
  - We must show people and teach people the Christ of scripture and not a Christ of the times molded by the wishes and whims of society.
  - In other words, a Messiah not connected to scripture is no Messiah at all and Christ has made Himself clearly known both verbally and visually.
- So despite the great unbelief of those cities at that point in time, there seems to have been some who were drawn to Christ and were convinced of His identity.
  - I mention this because the text tells us in verse 22, that upon Jesus' arrival, a group of people brought a blind man to Him and implored Him to touch him.
  - There seems to be some sense of faith being exhibited here.
- I say that because Mark's use of language in the Greek suggests this.
  - The word "brought" in Greek is *phero* which means to aid in carrying or bringing someone somewhere with you accompanying them.
  - In other words, these men believed that Jesus was able to heal this man to the point that they were willing to carry him to Jesus.
- This sense of anticipation should remind you of the paralytic who was brought to Jesus by his friends and lowered from a roof to be healed by Jesus. (Mark 2:3)
  - It was there where the man not only received forgiveness of sins, but was healed of his ailment.
  - Again this is the healing power of Christ and the great demonstration of faith in the person of Jesus.
- So these men, in faith, carry this man or lead him towards Christ even with such great unbelief amongst the land.
  - And how comforting is it to know that even today with the rejection of truth and scripture increasing, that men and women are still brought near to Christ in faith!
  - It simply shows that as believers, we must remain faithfully committed to the preaching and teaching of scripture even in a dying world.
- So, we see Jesus here compassionately responding to the needs of this man with much mercy. Check out verses 23-26:

**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.”

- With a loving and merciful response, Jesus takes the man by the hand and leads him out of the village to a private setting.
  - By now, you may be seeing a similar means of healing that Jesus uses with the man who was both deaf and mute (Mark 7:31-37)
    - He takes both the blind man and the deaf and mute man aside in a private manner. (Mark 7:33)
    - And what we are going to find here with Mark’s writing is his literary skills and emphasis on events and the actions of Christ are quite clever.
    - All of this again being prompted and led by the Spirit of God.
  - In a way, it seems as if these 2 miracles serve as illustrative bookends, reflecting the spiritual condition of the disciples.
    - From Mark 7:31 to Mark 8:26, it seems as if Mark is making this point of the cause or hinderance of the disciples’ “lack of understanding”, fully, Jesus’ Person and Purpose.
  - It begins with the healing of the deaf and mute man and now we find ourselves at the healing of the blind man.
    - Could it be that these two healings are foundational to the disciples’ problems, spiritually speaking? I do believe so.
  - In any case, we will see that Jesus will be the One in whom will provide the means by which understanding will become clear and their spiritual sight, even clearer.
    - There is now another question that arises in verse 23 where Jesus takes the man outside the village.
    - And that question is: “Why is it necessary for Jesus to take this man aside in order to bring the man’s sight back?”
    - Wouldn’t performing this miracle inside the village served as a better opportunity for others to see what He will do?
  - Keep in mind the recap from earlier: Another miracle from Jesus for this town would not have caused others to repent and place faith in Christ.
    - This was in fact what the religious leaders were asking Jesus in Dalmanutha, “Show us a sign from Heaven”.
    - These men’s minds were made up and there was no change of mind from those cities.
    - As a matter of fact, history tells us, according to the Woe’s Jesus pronounced, that those cities today are in ruins – a ghost town if you will.
    - All that lies there today in Bethsaida, Capernaum, and Chorazin are ruins of what was.
  - However, from that place, was a man that came to the realization that his only hope for sight and reorientation into human community was found in Christ alone.
    - Therefore, it only makes sense that this demonstration of Power would only

be done in private with those who recognized the uniqueness of Christ's person.

- As a side note, the needs of people seeking signs for the sake of proof to accept Jesus' claims or not, speaks further to their blindness and hardness of heart.
  - Friends, true repentance or change of mind, begins with recognizing that we are sinners in trouble with a Holy and Just God.
  - Repentance is what I consider to be that "rock bottom" moment.
  - It's where you realize that your attempts to get God's acceptance of you and your way versus His way, fail and that there is no other way but God's way.
- To put it plainly, God's means of judgment and holiness and righteousness are completely separate from our way.
  - The only way in which we can fully receive God's approval and be kept from His wrath is through the provision that He has provided and set forth.
  - And that provision that He has made for us is only found in Christ, the God-man, the Messiah – He alone can forgive sins and make us stand faultless before the throne of Grace.
- Secondly, we see Jesus taking the man aside in private because it shows this reality that the Lord reveals Himself personally to individuals.
  - In other words, your salvation in Christ is a personal experience between you and the Lord where you place faith in Christ.
  - Your mother, grandmother, aunties, uncles, nor your Pastor can initiate a relationship for you with God.
  - They can introduce you to the Gospel and walk the horse to water, as the old adage goes, but they can't make you drink.
  - To put it plainly, it requires Christ to personally reveal Himself to you by His Spirit.
- So as Jesus takes this man aside, we see yet another similar pattern of healing as He did with the mute and deaf man.
  - He uses spittle and lays His hands on the man's eyes (v.23)
- Now what you will find most remarkable to witness here is how Jesus goes about accomplishing this particular healing.
  - After Jesus puts His hands on the man's eyes, Jesus asks him, "Do you see anything?"
  - Well this is different! It is only here in Mark's gospel that we see Jesus ask a question of one in whom He has healed about the healing.
- Well this begs a question doesn't it: "What is the purpose of Jesus asking the question to the man?"
  - It is as if Jesus is choosing to do this healing in steps or phases in effort to show something.
- Understand that Jesus could have healed this man with a simple touch, or even a present or sent word, yet He chooses to do this healing in phases.
  - Clearly, there is something in this present situation that the disciples are to both see and understand at this point.

- And the point that is being shown here in the text is that this physical phase of healing is revelation of a lack of spiritual awareness for the disciples.
  - Let's see what it is.
- In verse 24, Mark tells us the man's response to this first touch from Jesus. He said "I see men, for I see them like trees, walking around."
  - At first glance it seems like the man has gained partial sight!
  - He has just expressed a sense of the outline and forms of people moving around, yet not with much clarity.
  - It's like someone in need of their glasses trying to make out the signage that is 50 feet in front of them.
  - They see a sign there yet they don't know what it says.
- But before we move too quickly, there is a question that comes to mind: "How does this man who was blind, know what men and trees look like?"
  - Friends, one can only presuppose that this man, at one point, could see.
  - And what becomes quite telling is that the man now has "eyes to see but can not fully perceive who these figures are."
- It seems as if the current condition of the man is in sync with the very question that Jesus asked His disciples in Mark 8:18:
  - "Having eyes, do you not see?"
- The progressive healing of this man's physical eyes was the means by which the Lord would address the disciples' spiritual eyes.
  - They were not blinded, they simply needed to be given spiritual clarity.
  - This is why, when Peter mentions in next week's teaching that Jesus is the Christ, Jesus tells him this powerful statement:
    - "Flesh and blood did not reveal that to you, but my Father in Heaven did."
- What is so comforting here in the text is that God has not only provided partial sight to the man, but He will soon provide full sight.
  - And in the same way, where the disciples are a bit confused and fuzzy on Jesus' mission at the moment, there will be a time of full clarity.
  - The disciples had moved from non-understanding, to misunderstanding, but will eventually have complete understanding.
  - Check out verses 25 and 26.
- In verse 25, Mark tells us that Jesus proceeds to lay his hands on the man's eyes again.
  - And it's upon the second touch that the man receives full sight.
- When you intently look at this healing in its entirety, you begin to gain clarity as to what Jesus is foreshadowing regarding the disciples gradual spiritual clarity.
  - As well as how one comes to faith in Christ, today.
- Jesus, as we will find in next week's teaching, will provide for them that "first touch", in a way, by the Spirit.
  - They will see that Christ is in fact the Messiah. But what they will understand

is His purpose regarding His first coming.

- Isaiah 35:5 tells us this reality of truth in Christ first coming as well as this reality in His second coming for Israel (nationally) to receive their King.

**Isaiah 35:5 Then the eyes of the blind will be opened  
And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped.**

- And this revelation will not be given based upon human willing and working, but rather through Divine illumination.
  - Friends the reality is, this is the only way in which you and I come to know Jesus.
  - The Holy Spirit opened your eyes to the truth of Christ.
    - And for some, this drawing ranges from an instant response to responding in faith to over a series of months or years.
    - Some of you may have heard the gospel, put it on the shelf and then revisited it later.
    - Others, it was through a series of events in which God gained your attention to see Him.
    - This divine illumination takes place on God’s timetable, by God’s drawing, by God’s power!
  - Here is a quick pop quiz...if the disciples’ first “touch” of clarity will be Peter’s great confession, what will be their “second touch” – Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection.
  - What mercy it is to receive this sight and to know that God has made Himself known to you that you may be saved through His death, burial, and resurrection.
    - Knowing the power of Christ and the richness of His love, one cannot stop but think of the words to this hymn:

**Amazing grace how sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me  
I once was lost but now I’m found  
Was blind but now I see.**

- Finally, we see in verse 26, that after Jesus heals the man, He sends the man home and tells him, “Do not even enter the village.”
  - Again, why not becomes the question?
  - Simply put: Others will have to see for themselves what they are not willing to see presently.
    - And the only way they will see who Messiah and His first coming is about is through the path that will lead Jesus to Golgotha and upon the cross.
    - For, in order to see things clearly, one must be given the proper lenses to see through – and that only God can give.
    - Let’s Pray.