

SERIES: **The Jesus Journey**
TITLE: **The Struggle to See** TEXT: **Mark 8:10-30**

The book of Mark is typically divided into 2 sections: Jesus' ministry around Galilee and Jesus journey to Jerusalem
We are now at the pivotal point in which the journey to Jerusalem begins
And the journey to Jerusalem is, as we will discover, a journey for spiritual sight

My shock as a new dad: babies don't see well! It takes some time for them to see clearly.
Spiritually, we're a lot like that.

Some people *refuse* to open their eyes at all — they don't want to see Jesus.

But others are still learning to focus — they see Him, but not clearly yet.

That's what's happening in our text today; some refuse to see, closing their eyes to Jesus,
yet others have sight, but it's not fully developed

MARK 8:10-13 And he immediately got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha.

a 2013 excavation found the oldest synagogue yet discovered there-

this tell us there is a deep history of Jewish Torah teaching here, but as we'll see, they are too deep in their
own ways to see God's way

¹¹The Pharisees (a group of religious leaders) came and began to argue with him, demanding of him a sign from
heaven to test him. ¹²Sighing deeply in his spirit, he said, "Why does this generation demand a sign? Truly I tell
you, no sign will be given to this generation." ¹³Then he left them, got back into the boat, and went to the other side.

The sigh in v.12 is not the same type of sigh he let out in CH.7 with the deaf and mute man

In that case He was grieving for the man; in this case He is grieving because of them & their unbelief

What's happening here, why doesn't Jesus just give them a sign so that they might believe?

Jesus gave many signs out of compassion for the people's need;

but the Pharisees aren't asking for a sign from a place of need-

they are demanding for one from a place of settled unbelief.

He refuses because Jesus isn't under their judgment, they are under His (and don't even realize it)

Here's the reality: **Some people will reject any signs because they've already rejected Jesus**

They don't ask for a sign because they're on the fence, but because they're on the attack

By this point they have already begun to plot his death (3:6)

Before Jesus defended His actions to the Pharisees and demonstrated His power and authority;

But now He shifts, they reject all evidence and refuse to believe,

so He refuses to give them any more evidence than what they already have.

John 12:37 Even though he had performed so many signs in their presence, they did not believe in him.

Notice what they ask for: '**A sign from heaven**'- when studying the cultural context of the time, you find that this
has to do with the political deliverance of the nation of Israel and the complete destruction of her enemies.

It's not what He came to do and therefore He is not who they want (He just fed 4,000 gentiles)

They're intentionally blind; but there is another kind of blindness; those who are ignorantly blind-

MARK 8:14-21 The disciples had forgotten to take bread and had only one loaf with them in the boat.

¹⁵Then he gave them strict orders: “Watch out! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.”

They didn’t have much in common. The Pharisees were full of religious duties and Herod was full of himself- but both shared a refusal to believe in Jesus, even in the face of overwhelming evidence that He is the Son of God

¹⁶They were discussing among themselves that they did not have any bread. ¹⁷Aware of this, he said to them, “Why are you discussing the fact you have no bread? Don’t you understand or comprehend? Do you have hardened hearts? ¹⁸Do you have eyes and not see; do you have ears and not hear? And do you not remember?

¹⁹When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of leftovers did you collect?”

“Twelve,” they told him. ²⁰“When I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many baskets full of pieces did you collect?” “Seven,” they said. ²¹And he said to them, “Don’t you understand yet?”

Their worries about something as mundane as having enough to eat made them blind to the fact that they had a bread maker with them on the boat, and so they are deaf to the warning against the blindness of unbelief

Some people miss the signs because they misunderstand Jesus

They’re not rejecting, just haven’t recognized yet

For those of us who have been following along in the book of Mark, we are tempted to ask-

‘How could the disciples forget everything that Jesus has already done?’

But when we face the next difficult thing in life- an unexpected bill; illness; some family tragedy; etc.- the questions comes back on us. ***“How is it we forget everything Jesus has already done?”***

We have the testimony of scripture showing us the works of Jesus, and we have the testimony of each of our lives, in which Gods’ hand can be seen throughout our past struggles

The biggest problem with the disciples is not their blindness, but their failure to recognize that they are blind.

As we look at the text, it will only do its work in us, not when we ask, ***“how can they be so dense?”*** but when we can reflect, ***“how can I be so dense?”***

Jesus is warning them that their worry about bread leaves them susceptible to unbelief.

They are worried about all the wrong things.

When we worry about matters of life, against the backdrop of all that God has already revealed, the warning is for us as well. Is my heart hardened? Am I blind? Do I understand?

It’s easier to emphasize with the disciple’s lack of spiritual vision when we can accept that we still struggle to see as well- and in so doing, we still struggle to trust God with the mundane things of life

Tim Keller- *“Those of you who are twenty, do you remember your fifteen year old self, remember what an idiot you were? Ok, it slows down a little bit. But I want you to know your thirty year old self will think you’re an idiot now and your forty five year old self will think your thirty year old self is an idiot which means? ... You’re always a fool. You’re always an idiot.”*

Now, I want to point out a few things as it relates to the Gospel message of Jesus and our culture-

1. Christians, we need to recognize the difference between willful blindness and immature sight in others

- Some people need more time, more grace, more love- we give them more of ourselves in the power of God
- Others have their minds made up, and may even be hostile- we give them over to God in prayer

2. **Non-Christians, you need to examine whether your skepticism is due to stubborn unbelief or shallow understanding**

- The burden of proof is on you, not God

‘Markan Sandwich’ - section 8:22-10:52

At each bookend is the story of physical blindness, but the stories in between deal with spiritual blindness

MARK 8:22-26 They came to Bethsaida. They brought a blind man to him and begged him to touch him.

The location makes what’s about to happen even more profound-

this is the hometown of 3 of the 12 disciples who can’t see yet (Peter, Andrew and Philip)

²³ He took the blind man by the hand and brought him out of the village. Spitting on his eyes and laying his hands on him, he asked him, “Do you see anything?” ²⁴ He looked up and said, “I see people—they look like trees walking.” ²⁵ Again Jesus placed his hands on the man’s eyes. The man looked intently and his sight was restored and he saw everything clearly. ²⁶ Then he sent him home, saying, “Don’t even go into the village.”

What’s going on? Is Jesus running low on power???

Some have tried to argue this shows Jesus’ lack of power- I argue this shows how much He is in control!

The man is meant to be a sign to the disciples, who have partial sight and partial blindness spiritually

There’s actually another Markan sandwich

8:14-21 the disciples blindness; 8:22-26 healing of blind man progressively; 8:31-33 Peter’s blindness

But they are starting to see, they are starting to recognize-

MARK 8:27-30 Jesus went out with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi.

Again, the location is no insignificant detail-

on the hillside was a cavern where it was believed that was the birthplace of the Greek God Pan.

Further up on the hillside was the temple of white marble for to Caesar, the Roman Emperor, the ruler of the world, who was regarded as a God.

It was here of all places, in a region with a long history of paganism and polytheism, that Peter first discovered that the wandering teacher from Nazareth was the anointed one, the Son of God.

And on the road he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” ²⁸ They answered him, “John the Baptist; others, Elijah; still others, one of the prophets.” ²⁹ “But you,” he asked them, “who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Messiah.”

Messiah/ Christ; not a name, but a title= lit. Anointed One

In the OT people were anointed for three special tasks: priests, prophets and kings- Jesus is all three

³⁰ And he strictly warned them to tell no one about him.

No sooner had Peter made this discovery, that Jesus tells them not to tell anyone about it. Why?

Because Jesus still had to teach Peter and the others what kind of Messiah He was.

To the Jewish mind of the day, the Messiah would be the most destructive conqueror in history, smashing his enemies to utter extinction and restoring the nation of Israel.

They were looking for nationalistic freedom, and had neglected their greater need, spiritual freedom.

There was no room in that thought process for a Messiah who would suffer, no room for a cross, no room for loving sacrifice, no room for the real Jesus

Jesus allows the disciples space for grace- He knows they will not see in an instant but progressively.

And He knows the same is true for us- we will be increasingly clarifying our sight while in this life, but all the while, there will still be blind spots, and moments when we don't understand what God is doing

Barclay- "We, too, are blind. If we could only read the lessons of experience aright, it would teach us not the pessimism of the things that cannot be, but the hope which stands amazed that God has brought us thus far in safety and in certainty and the confidence that God can bring us through anything that may happen."

Our Mission statement: **To develop people that are becoming increasingly God-centered and others-oriented.**

We recognize it's a process- **Philippians 1:6** I am sure of this, that he who **started** a good work in you will **carry it on to completion** until the day of Christ Jesus.

A newborn baby can see light and shadow, shapes and movement — but faces, colors, and details are unclear.

Over time, the blur becomes a face — and that face becomes familiar.

The one who once seemed distant and undefined becomes the one they trust most.

I can still recall the first time I felt each of my children recognized me!

NASB95 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.

God is forming spiritual sight, turning blurs into clarity, confusion into conviction, half-seeing into full trust.

And the good news is that Jesus doesn't cast us off for seeing dimly.

He stays near, lays His hands on our eyes again and again, until we begin to see Him clearly.

We may not see everything yet — but we see *enough* of Jesus to keep walking.

Until one day as Paul said, *we will see face to face*

Key takeaway: Look long at Jesus, until the blur gives way to belief

CALL UP WORSHIP TEAM

Maybe today you realize you've been living with closed eyes — unwilling to see who Jesus really is.

Or maybe you've seen Him, but only in part.

Either way, His invitation is the same: Let Him open your eyes.

INVITATION PRAYER

BULPEN-

Parallel passage Matthew 15:29-39 and ch.16

Yet another bread and boat scene

1st- Jesus calmed the sea and rebuked the disciple's lack of faith

2nd- Jesus came walking on the waves and Mark tells us that the disciple's had not understood about the miracle of the loaves and the fish and their hearts were hardened

3rd Jesus again performs a miracle of loaves and fish- and again we will find the disciple's still don't understand

'A sign from heaven' - *"Something that is apocalyptic in tone, triumphalistic in character, and the embodiment of one of the mighty deeds of deliverance that God had to worked on Israel's behalf in rescuing it from slavery. Ironically, this request comes after the miraculous feeding, a miracle that pointed to the blessing, not the destruction, of Gentiles. Jesus refuses to give the Pharisees a sign from heaven because God has sent him to give his life on the cross for all humanity, not to smash the enemies of Israel or to give the nation political mastery of the world."*

V23 hands would be laid on people and animals by the priests to transfer them from profane to sacred purposes.
Jesus' hands did not transfer power from the profane to the sacred, but rather transferred sacred power to the profane

Barclay- *"From Him who has eyes to see and a heart to understand, the daily miracle of night and day, and the daily splendor of all common things are sign enough from God."*

Belief that and belief in- we need to believe that Jesus is the Messiah and is able to supply all that we need; then we need to live that belief out as life plays out

Revelation 3:17 For you say, 'I'm rich; I have become wealthy and need nothing,' and you don't realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked.